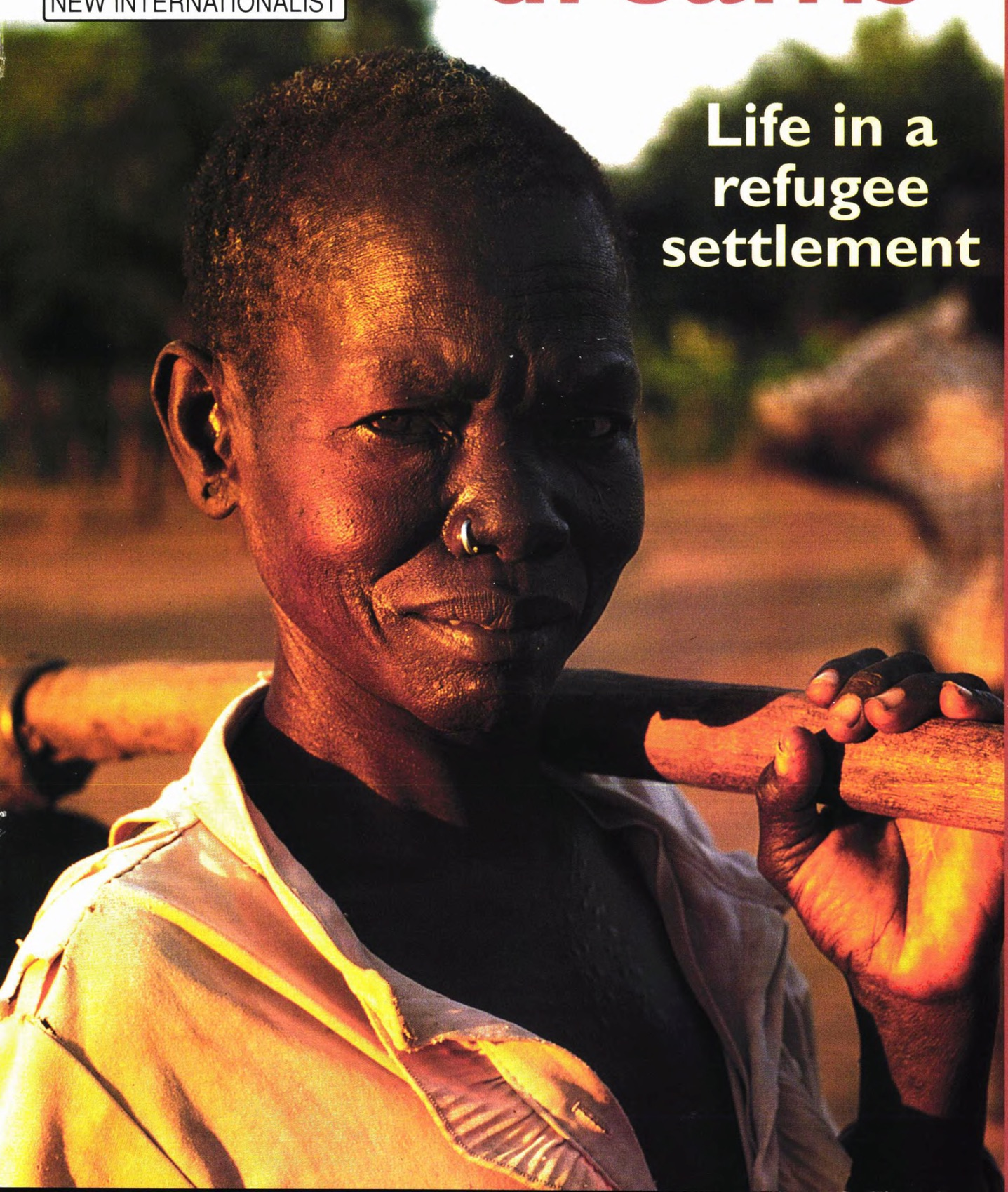
No. 283 / SEPTEMBER 1996

THE NI NEW INTERNATIONALIST

Field of dreams



Life in a refugee settlement

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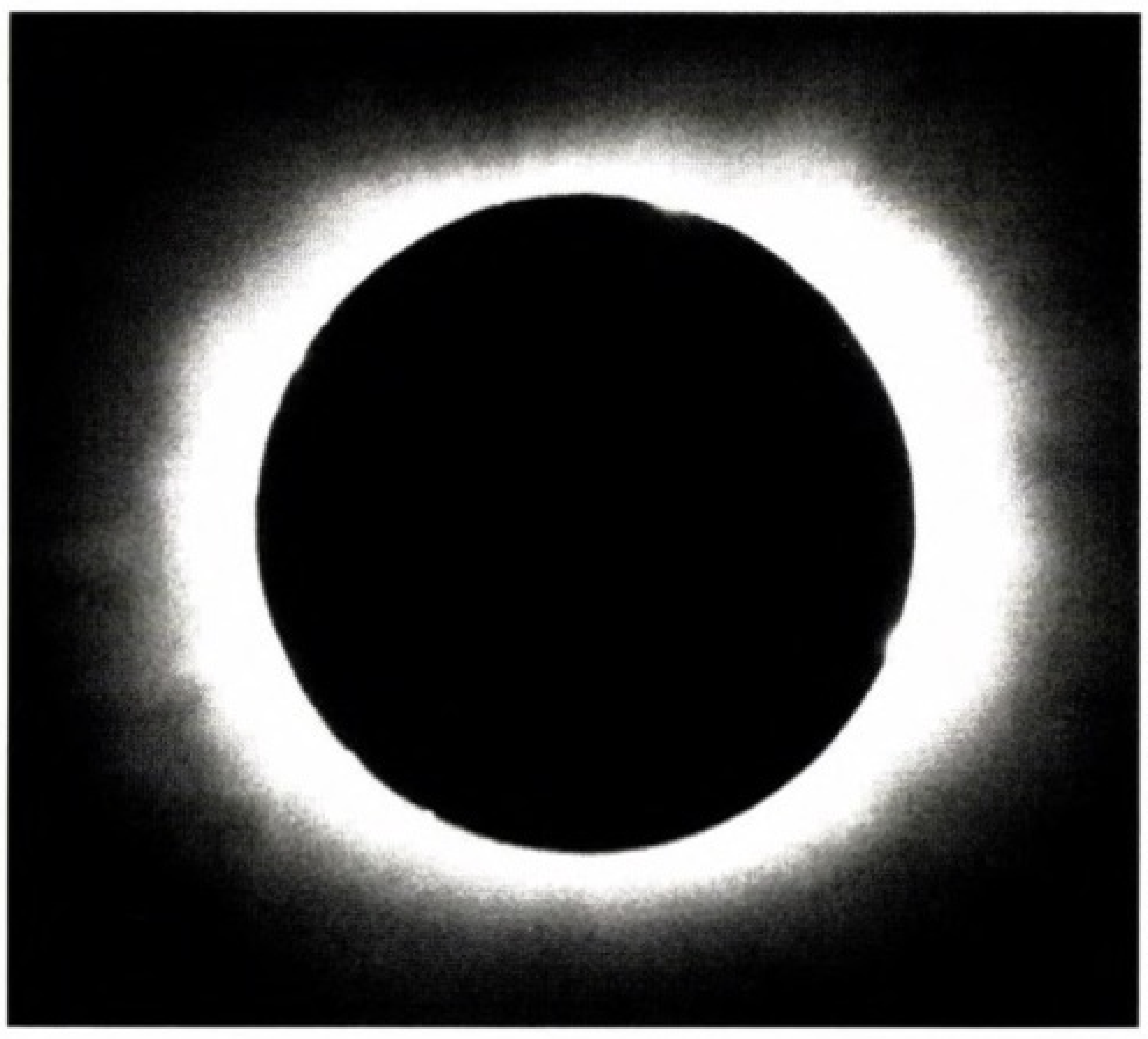
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- **Discomfort 100**: what to do in a Bangkok traffic jam
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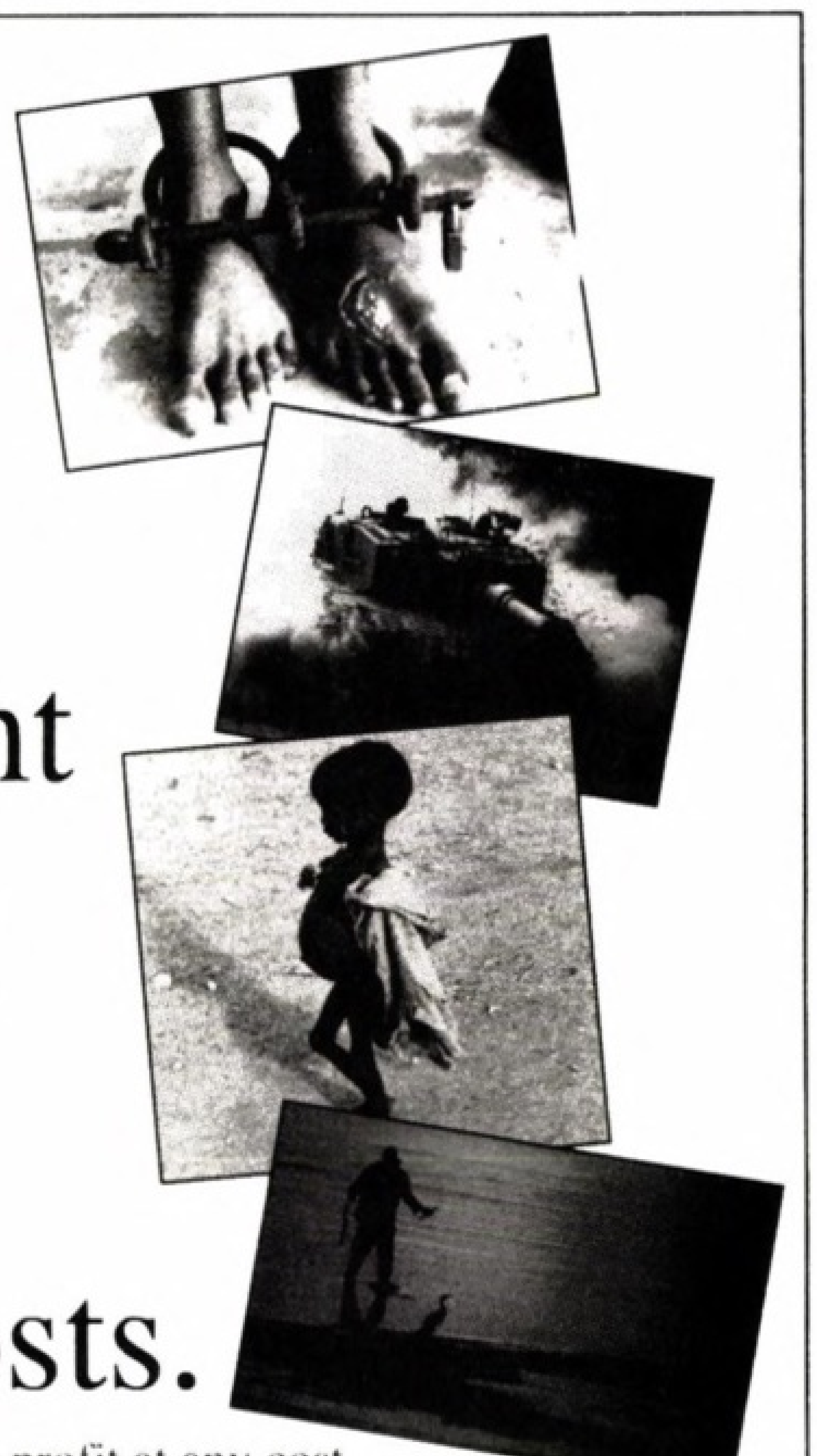

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This is an appalling story. Please don't read it unless you're willing to help.

Shells were falling in Kabul. It was bitterly cold and there was little food. A young woman lived on her own with her three small children. The eldest was nine and the youngest was two. Their father had been killed in a bomb attack. The children were very hungry. During a lull in the bombardment, the woman left her home to find some food.

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Amnesty International: working worldwide for the release of prisoners of conscience, fair trials for political prisoners and an end to torture, extra-judicial executions, "disappearances" and the death penalty.

She knew the city was dangerous, but her children's hunger over-rode her fears. Before leaving her house she carefully locked the door, so that the children would at least have the protection of a strong plank of wood between them and danger.

The woman had not gone far when she was stopped by two men dressed as guards. She explained to them that her children were starving, but they didn't want to hear. They told her she was under arrest and took her to a house full of men in dirty uniforms.

One by one, the men raped her. She was raped by twenty two men. It took three days. At last she was allowed to go. The woman ran into the street and all the way home. The door was still locked.

Opening it, she found that her three children had died of hypothermia.

Remember Afghanistan?

No-one else does. It's a place the world's leaders have forgotten, or chosen to ignore. For years a battleground of international power politics, it is now caught in a vicious civil war.

Two generations of children in Afghanistan have never known peace. Violence and death have become so much part of existence that even the rugs of Afghan nomads are woven with strange designs: Kalashnikov rifles, tanks and helicopter gunships.

In the towns, armed bands struggle to fill the vacuum left by the departed Russians. Kabul is the most lawless territory on earth. The gangs bombard and kill each other with complete disdain for innocent civilians caught in the crossfire.

Foreign governments have lined up to offer covert political and military aid to the various factions, and none seem to care that the groups they support are terrorizing defenceless men, women and children.

In Afghanistan such terrrible things are happening that we at Amnesty International, who should be used to reports of horror and inhumanity, are numb.

When our researchers went to the country, these were some of the stories they heard.

"They said they'd force me to eat human flesh."

A taxi driver taking a woman passenger through Kabul was stopped by an armed gang. They ordered him to sign a paper saying he had sold his car to them.

When he refused they said they would force feed him human flesh. After a beating, he signed. But they did not let him go. They brought some cooked meat and forced him and the woman to eat. The driver ate a small piece and felt sick. Next his captors demanded that he sign another paper, stating that the woman passenger was his sister and that he had sold her to them for a certain sum of Afhanis.

The taxi driver refused and was beaten again. At last the two prisoners were told they could go. The driver had started down the stairs when he heard a noise behind him. He turned, and saw that the woman was no longer there.

"He had taught girls at the village school".

A woman described to Amnesty International how her four small children saw their father killed. z

He was a schoolteacher. Mujahideen guards came to their house. They confronted him with the fact that he taught girls at the village school. (Some Mujahideen think that women should not go to school.)

The gunmen began beating the teacher. His wife and children shouted for mercy, but they would not stop. At last one of them unslung his Kalashnikov, stood back and shot the teacher in the heart.

"I cannot describe what they did to me."

A 15 year old girl who had committed the crime of going to school told us what happened when a gang of armed men came to her house one night.

"They shot my father right in front of me. He was a shopkeeper. It was nine o'clock at night. They came to our house and told him they had orders to kill him because he had allowed me to go to school.

"The Mujahideen had already stopped me from going

Refugee children await medical treatment. Thousands have been killed in the fighting.

to school, but that was not enough. They then came and killed my father. I cannot describe what they did to me after killing my father."

These people have one last and only hope.

Did you go to school? When was the last time you left your house to buy some food? Do you worry about taking a taxi by yourself?

Imagine, for a moment, swapping lives with people in Afghanistan. How long could you endure the terror?

Wouldn't you desperately pray for help? Help from anywhere, from anyone?

Do you want to know the really frightening truth? These people's last and only hope is you.

Governments don't want to know. There's only you and the only realistic way you can make a difference is by joining with thousands of other people who feel the same way. Please join Amnesty International.

With enough support, we can help to stop the killings and rapes. We will know we have enough support when they stop.

Amnesty International will never give up.

With your support we will continue to investigate, publicise and campaign to stop the atrocities that are taking place in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

You, as a free human being, have at this moment the simple choice of whether or not to help us.

If you want to help, join Amnesty International today. Whether you join us, or make a donation, your support is valuable and deeply welcome.

There is nothing left to say.

If you are going to turn the page, if these people's stories do not move you, if you can't find it in you to help - then there is nothing more to say.

The woman who lost her children is now insane. The fifteen year old who was daring enough to go to school cannot speak about her ordeal.

They have no words to implore you.

Neither have we. We have run out of words to describe pain and grief. The rest of this page is for you. Use it to write down your reasons for reading these stories and still refusing to help.

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ALL PHOTOGRAPHS (EXCEPT WHERE OTHERWISE CREDITED) TAKEN BY **JENNY MATTHEWS/NETWORK** IN IKAFE.
MAGAZINE DESIGNED BY **ANDREW KOKOTKA**.

THIS MONTH'S **THEME**

A refugee settlement

FROM THIS MONTH'S **EDITOR**

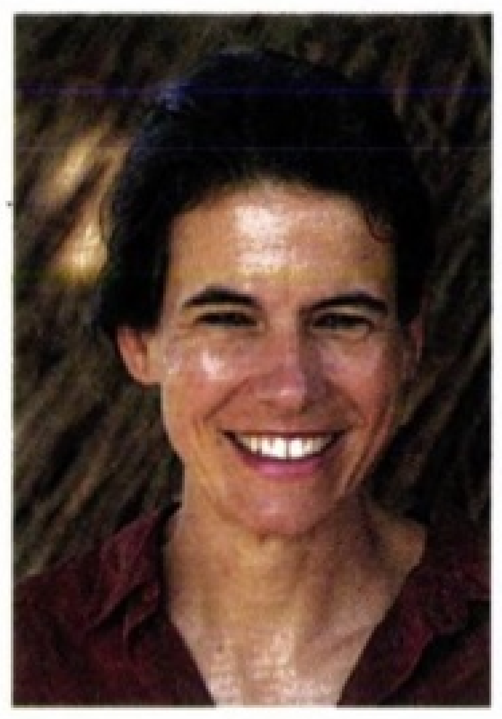
WHAT does the term 'refugee' mean to you? Wide-eyed orphans in Bosnia, groups of ragged and starving people in Africa? Or people seeking refuge from persecution or poverty?

'A refugee is a negative person... a birthchild of bad political decisions and actions by Governments,' says Carlos Twesigomwe, the Deputy Director of Refugees in Uganda. 'The major consequences of these decisions are the persecution of individuals and massive situations of conflict.'

So why should this concern us? Because, like us – our children, our friends and our neighbours – refugees are human. They feel pain and suffering in the same way that we do, and our basic common humanity calls us to help.

But there are other reasons. Many of our governments are implicated, directly or indirectly, currently or historically, in the conflicts that cause refugees to flee. And there are more of them all the time. In 1989 there were 17 million refugees; in 1993 there were 23 million and in 1995 there were 27 million. The result is that today governments are having to define their policies on asylum-seekers ever more clearly.

It was with this in mind that we decided to produce an issue of the **NI** looking at life inside a refugee settlement. As this issue's editor I wanted to find out for myself and I also wanted to bring home to readers how refugees lived their lives, fetched their water, cooked their food, looked after their children, and sorted out their problems.



I chose Africa because it is the media images of African refugees that are the most painful and the most dehumanised. And yet of all governments, those in Africa are among the most tolerant and most welcoming to the traumatized thousands seeking refuge on their territory.

Refugee situations, at least to start with, are usually classic 'emergencies' in which people are deprived of any say in what happens to them. Rwanda, Sudan, Bosnia, Afghanistan: the first floods of people leaving a country in a hurry inevitably create chaos. Food, water and shelter have to be the first priorities. But often refugee projects are unable to move beyond this. It is crucial that they do. 'Denying refugees the chance to participate deprives them of self-esteem and dignity, causing depression, anxiety and apathy,' says one commentator.

I could have gone anywhere. But in the end I chose Ikafe, a settlement for Sudanese refugees in northernmost Uganda. There on a huge parcel of land that was formerly dense bush, Oxfam, together with the Government of Uganda and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have launched a brave experiment.

Instead of the usual relationship of powerful donor and dependent recipient, the goal was for refugees to take charge of their own lives. It's an approach that Tony Burdon, Oxfam's Country Representative in Uganda, calls 'working with refugees in a way that increases their voice'. In Ikafe it means providing them with land so they can grow food for themselves; developing a system of democratic decision-making and encouraging women to become central players in that system.

The situation of refugees normally renders them powerless and persecuted. Ikafe is trying to change this, to involve the refugees in a way which gives them back their dignity. And that's what I wanted to explore. Were the refugees really able to make their voices heard? Could they grow their own food? Would Ikafe be able to challenge the media stereotype of apathy and horror?

This magazine is the result of my findings...

Nikki van der Gaag

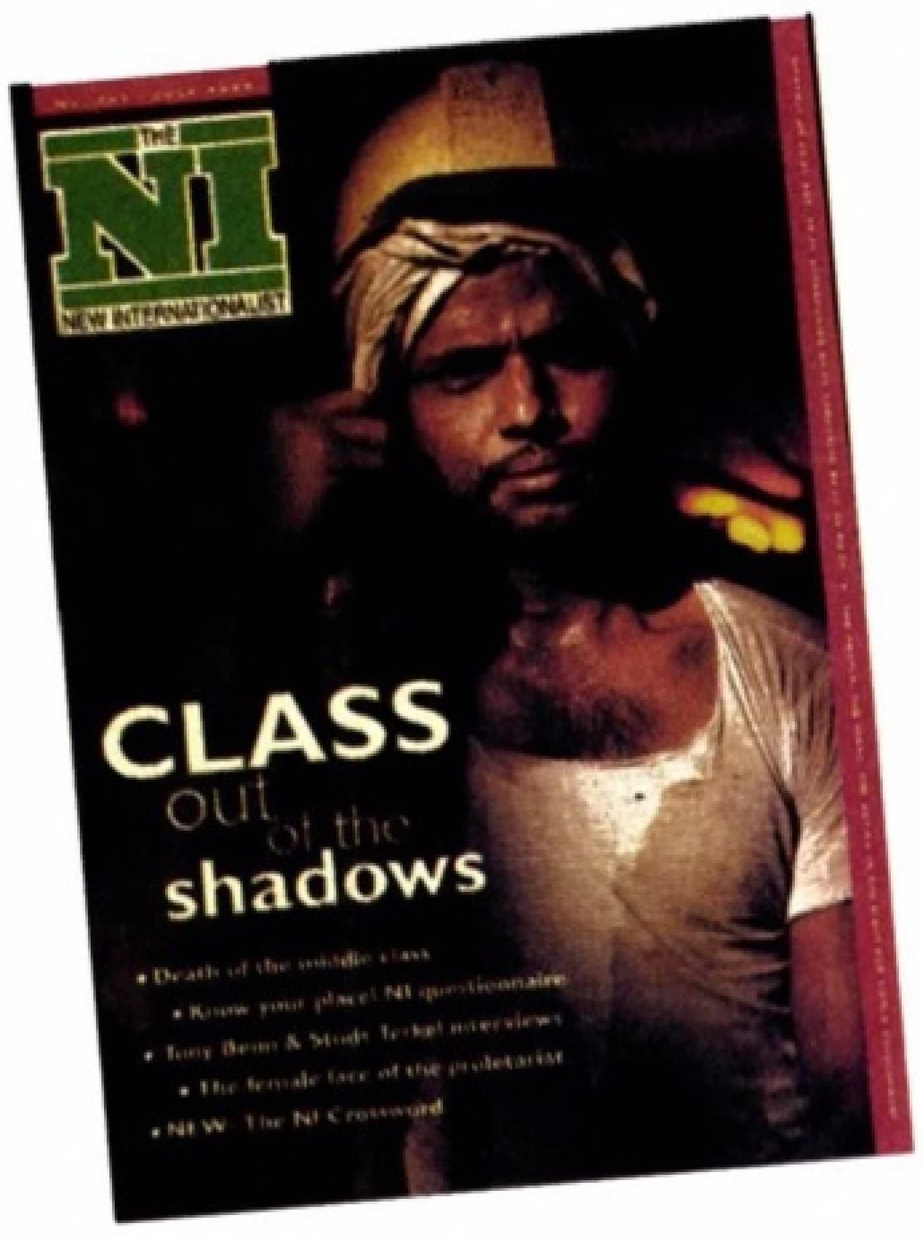
Nikki van der Gaag
for the ***New Internationalist*** *Co-operative*

Letters

The New Internationalist welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address and e-mail are inside the front cover.

Micro-credit

Your issue on ***Class*** (**NI 281**) portrayed the difficulties facing the poor – particularly women – across the world, and the barriers which keep them 'in their place'.



One very positive development over the last 20 years has been the use of micro-credit in developing countries. Small loans, enabling poor people to start their own businesses, empower them to take control over their own lives and work their own way out of poverty, enriching themselves, their families and their communities.

The Grameen Bank and Africa Now are two examples of successful schemes. Micro-credit can also help poor people in the industrialized world, as shown by the success of the Women's Self-Employment Project in Chicago.

In February 1997 the Micro-Credit Summit will bring together parliamentarians and interested parties from around the world with the aim of launching a campaign to extend micro-credit to 100 million of the world's poorest families by the year 2005. For further information, contact Results UK, Venture House, Cross Street, Macclesfield SK11 7PG, England.

Mark Sasse
Coventry, England

One choice

Your issue on ***Burma*** (**NI 280**) is clear that tourists should not visit Burma. But according to an article I read in a local magazine, a group of travellers concluded that the Burmese people do want you to come to their country: 'In our tour through this country long on discipline but short on progress, one thing was clear: going there is a tough moral call to make but to the Burmese people we talked to, you only have one choice. They want you to come and see how their Government has managed to turn *Shwe Puidaw* – the Golden Land – into one of the 10 poorest countries in the world. They want you to tell their horror stories. Your only responsibility is to pass them along.'

S Edwards
Dubai, United Arab Emirates

PepsiCo

We were shocked to see you unilaterally let PepsiCo off the hook. Contrary to what you state in your issue on ***Burma*** (**NI 280**), the company has not left the country, but is simply engaged in paper shuffling. It has turned its operations into a franchise directly owned by a Burmese company run by Thein Tun, who chaired a mass rally for the Burmese dictatorship in June where he denounced Burma's democracy movement.

Meanwhile, PepsiCo itself still refuses to explain how it could have exported agricultural goods from Burma without trading in produce grown by using forced labour. To have avoided this, PepsiCo must have known about the practice long before the human-rights groups did. Yet it did not present any testimony concerning this during US Government hearings on Burma, nor did it inform even its own shareholders.

Had you contacted the PepsiCo/Burma boycott organizers you would have avoided a major error which has set our work back considerably.

Reid Cooper and Terry Cottam
Burma-Tibet Group, Ottawa, Canada.

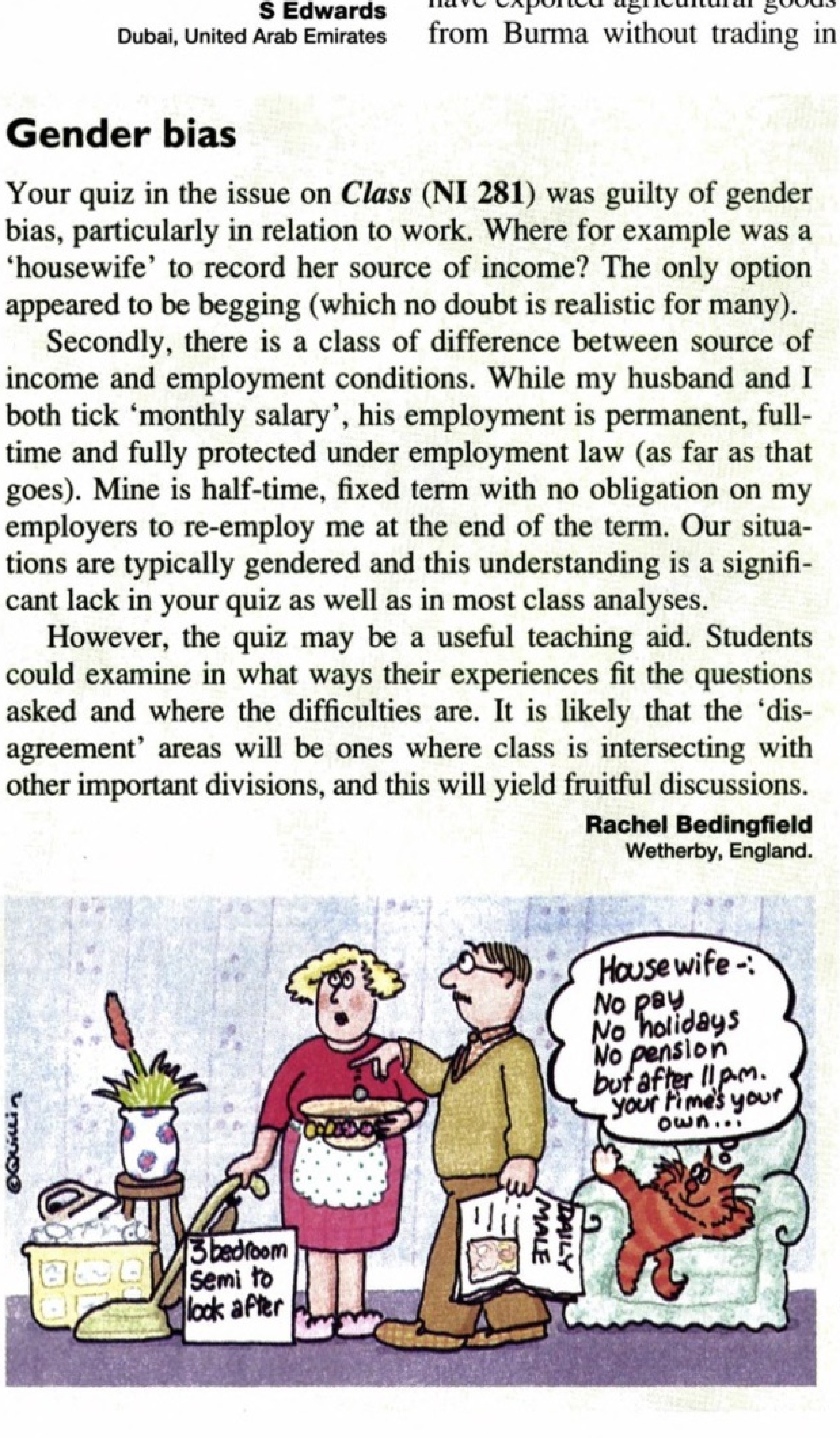
Gender bias

Your quiz in the issue on ***Class*** (**NI 281**) was guilty of gender bias, particularly in relation to work. Where for example was a 'housewife' to record her source of income? The only option appeared to be begging (which no doubt is realistic for many).

Secondly, there is a class of difference between source of income and employment conditions. While my husband and I both tick 'monthly salary', his employment is permanent, full-time and fully protected under employment law (as far as that goes). Mine is half-time, fixed term with no obligation on my employers to re-employ me at the end of the term. Our situations are typically gendered and this understanding is a significant lack in your quiz as well as in most class analyses.

However, the quiz may be a useful teaching aid. Students could examine in what ways their experiences fit the questions asked and where the difficulties are. It is likely that the 'disagreement' areas will be ones where class is intersecting with other important divisions, and this will yield fruitful discussions.

Rachel Bedingfield
Wetherby, England.


Housewife -:
No pay
No holidays
No pension
but after 11 p.m. your time's your own...
3 bedroom semi to look after
DAILY MALE
©Quillin

VIV QUILLIN

Own goals

Michael Mackenzie's well-meant comment (*Letters* **NI 280**) that the Bible's 'Book of Genesis depicts an initially harmonious relationship between humankind, God and creation', is typical of the ways religions score such 'own goals' and thus discredit their own good moral teachings, by basing them on such primitive fictions.

The above passage is palpable nonsense because in the past half billion years alone there have been at least three major and inharmonious extinctions of millions of innocent species on this planet, as shown by evidence rather more solid than the Bible can produce for Genesis.

(The religious person shies away from naming 'who' was responsible for such cruelty, but surely rationality and logic demand that 'he who created all', must take full responsibility for all?).

The Third World has enough troubles as it is, without unproven creeds fighting for its 'souls'.

Len Clarke
Uxbridge, England

Catastrophe

I am forced to agree with your correspondent FA Beal (**NI 280**) that 'the answer will only become apparent when the basic resources we are squandering seriously affect us directly.'

In the last fraction of a second of our cosmic timescale – this century and the last – humankind has done more damage to its habitat than in the rest of civilization.

For the first time the original meaning of economy – which comes from the Greek *oikonomia* meaning the careful and thrifty management of the household for the increasing benefit of its members over the long-term – has been totally replace by *chrematistics*, which is that branch of political economy relating to the manipulation of property and money so as to maximize the short-run monetary exchange value to the owners.

In the name of growth, money has become the major measure of value and meaning for many human beings – a substitute for the morality and spirituality that traditionally unified all life.

I'm sure the Executive Director of the UN Environment Program got it right when he said: 'We face by the turn of the century, an environmental catastrophe as complete and as irreversible as any nuclear holocaust.'

Derek Wilson
Wellington, Aotearoa/New Zealand

Lost land

Your readers must be aware of the reason for India's deafening silence at the Human Settlements Conference held recently in Istanbul.

The builders' lobby and the politicians in India are hand-in-glove. Thousands upon thousands of fertile acres of agricultural land have been taken over by the builders to provide housing – sometimes second and third homes for the middle classes.

The prices for these properties often exceed those in the West; the business is so lucrative that it involves organized crime. The net result is that India will face famine in the near future because its agricultural land will have been plundered and the vast majority of people will have to continue living, eating and shitting in the streets.

It is short-term, not long-term, gains that count in India.

Smita B Patil
Belgaum, India

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the New Internationalist.

LETTER FROM **RUSSIA**

Getting used to justice

Olivia Ward can't believe it when her law-abiding assistant Boris is thrown in jail.

THERE was something distinctly wrong. Boris's usually calm countenance was haggard, his lanky frame taut as a cable. If he was a smoking man, he'd be lighting Marlboros two at a time.

'Yesterday,' he rasped. 'I was in jail.'

I was stunned. Trouble was a thing my placid, law-abiding assistant would run a mile to avoid. Many an Orthodox priest had more on his conscience than Boris did.

He managed a laugh.

'I was only going for a picnic.'

It all began, he said, with a peaceful family scene. He and his wife Larissa, with Sasha aged 13 and 11-year-old Natasha, polished off a lunch *al fresco* in the sunny woods bordering Moscow's gothic university complex.

Afterwards, an eager Sasha persuaded Boris to give him a driving lesson on the empty pathway circling the flowerbeds. Carried away by the mellow mood of the afternoon, Boris agreed.

'A police car suddenly came up beside us. We pulled over, they asked for our identification.'

Seeing that Sasha was not a licensed driver, the police pointed their machine guns at Boris and ordered him to follow them.

'I soon saw where we were going,' he said, his face whitening at the memory. 'It was the university police station. I was taken out of the car and locked in a cell.'

For Boris the arrest was a double whammy. It was to that same station that he had been taken for questioning in the 1970s when, as a student, he was caught reading a forbidden book by Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

'I felt choked,' he said. 'That sensation of airlessness, of the oxygen being sucked out of my life, came back to me. It was like the past reaching out to strangle me.'

The afternoon sun dissolved into darkness. The line between darkness and light melted.

'I kept on demanding my rights. I insisted on knowing what I was charged with, and why they had locked me in a cell. The officer on duty just laughed.'

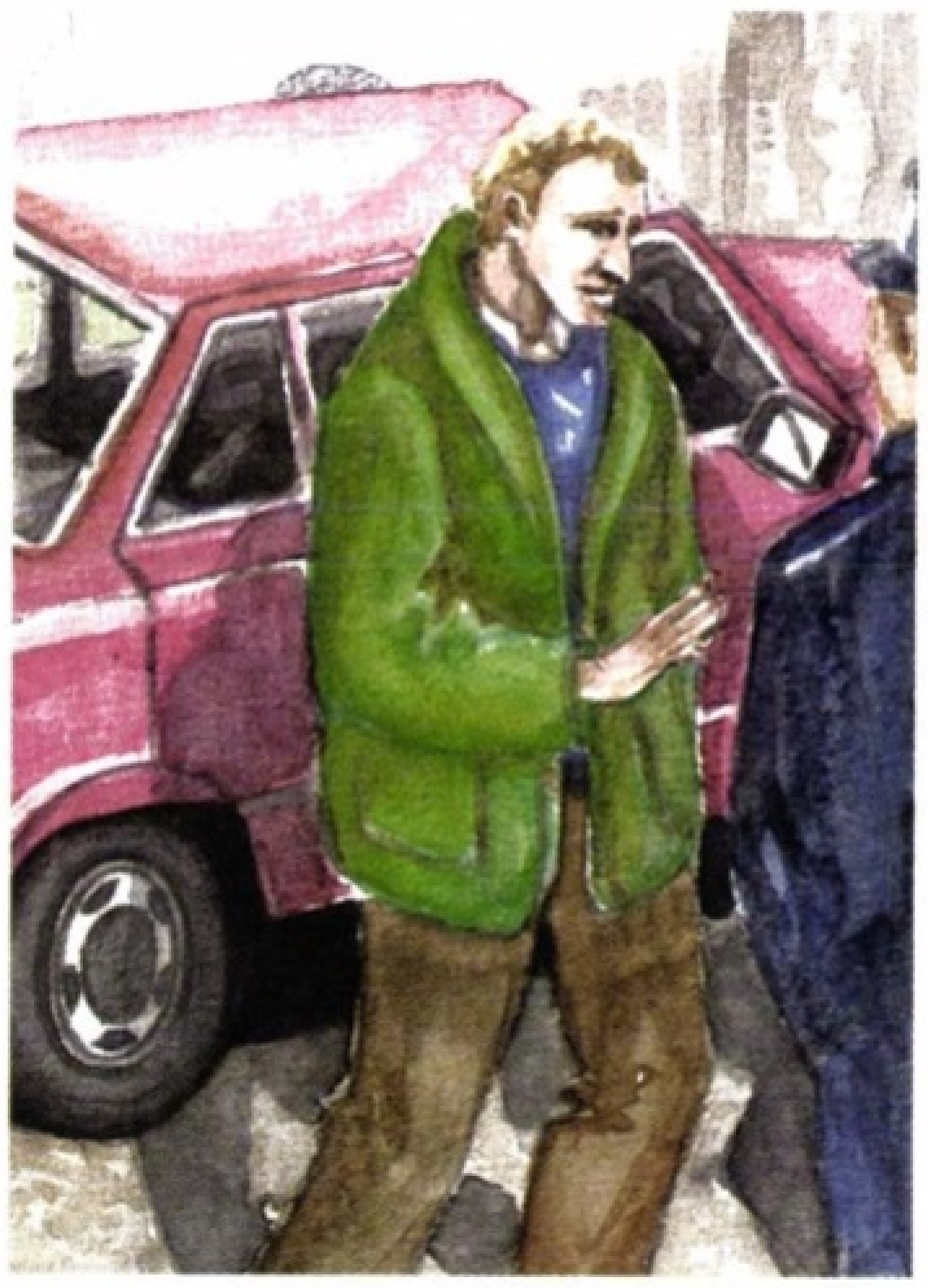
Minutes, hours passed. At last the officer handed Boris a printed form. As in the Soviet days, it was a blank confession that he was guilty as charged. If he signed it, he would be released. If not, he would lose his driver's license and be jailed indefinitely.

'What were the charges? What did they mean? Was I being fined or branded a criminal? Nobody would tell me.'

For Boris, as for others in this country suspended between past and future, a trap door had opened and dropped him into a crazy world of mirror-image reality.

'While I sat there I was thinking: "there is only one aim to this. To show me that they can do anything to me. That in front of faceless authority I am nobody."'

Boris wasn't alone in his misery. In the past three years I have known of numerous people who were intimidated, beaten or imprisoned without warning and without justification. They all shared the same overwhelming feeling of helplessness and betrayal.



MIRIAM McCURDY

'It's very different for somebody in the West,' said a musician who was pulled from his car, punched and jailed for arguing with a policeman who had blocked off his street. 'There you know you are in the right, and the whole country will support you.'

'This country has a history. They bury the bones but they keep poking up on the surface. We think we're in the clear, but we can never be free of that black past.'

Boris agreed glumly.

'The worst thing for me was being forced to sign the confession. It was exactly like the bad old days.'

For Russians, who a short time ago ran to embrace democracy, to find it merely a store window mannequin, such encounters are a particular dilemma. Spurn democracy because it didn't happen as planned, and it never would. Ignore the roughshod attitude to rights, and the result would be the same.

Leaving his jail cell, Boris tried to come to terms with that paradox: 'I told the cop I'd be making a formal protest. He only laughed and said: "Nobody will care."'

But for Boris it did make a difference. Even one voice in the wilderness was a voice that could become a chorus.

'Dostoevsky said that man can get used to anything,' he said. 'That has always meant we can live with any kind of suffering. Now it needs a new meaning. We can also get used to justice.' ■

Olivia Ward is bureau chief for the *Toronto Star* in Moscow.

Update

SENEGAL

It's unofficial

'Informal' economy keeps heads above water

DEVELOPMENT dollars are so scarce in Africa these days that, rather than setting up big initiatives to try and change things, planners are looking more at the initiatives that poor people come up with for themselves.

According to UN sources, 60 per cent of the labour force in Africa is employed in so-called 'informal' economic activities that are untaxed and otherwise 'illegal', and the sector is growing at an annual rate of 6.7 per cent. Despite years of painful restructuring, most African economies continue to flounder.

In Senegal a 50-per-cent currency devaluation aimed at boosting production and exports has resulted in soaring prices for necessities and has effectively doubled the country's foreign debt.

Every year there are 100,000 more people looking for jobs in Senegal with only 2,000 new positions available, says World Bank economist Abdoulaye Seck. 'What the other 98,000 are doing we really don't know,' he says, adding that statistics on them come largely from 'researchers' imaginations'.

What is known is that the money that is circulating amongst poor people is being reinvested into their communities. In Pikine, one of Dakar's poor outer suburbs, petty traders have pooled resources and constructed a new market. Pikine's mayor admits that such popular initiatives have created more infrastructural development in his municipality than his own administration.

People no longer expect much from the Government. Even where it does provide money, conditions are not improving, as evidenced by the falling rate of enrolment of children in state primary schools. But the reason for the drop is the growth in other schools funded by poor communities themselves, which have lower fees and where children are educated according to their communities' needs. Instructors at these schools often go on expeditions to junkyards and dumps with their students to look for teaching tools such as bottle tops and drinking straws. According to research done by Adel Arab, an education specialist, 69 per cent of the newly literate children in Dakar have gone through community schools.

The new importance African governments are putting on the economic activities of the poor was underlined when the presidents of Senegal and Mali attended the opening of Ecopole, a centre where poor people can exchange their ideas, whether these are about opening their own factories or learning how to make oil lamps from spent light bulbs. The centre is the brainchild of ENDA, a local development network, and it aims to have its own radio station and internet site.

For all the economic activity of the poor – whether it be baskets woven from old plastic bags, shoes cobbled from used car tyres or lamps made from coke cans – a major headache for the Government is taxation. Any attempt to collect taxes will push people further towards 'informal' activities and away from the state. In several Dakar slums, the city government has stopped charging rents and taxes that people cannot afford, although it also no longer supplies services such as electricity or running water. ■

David Hecht/ ENDA News Service

Few expectations from government education in Dakar.

JEREMY HARTLEY / PANOS PICTURES

Farming the cities

Agriculture is turning out to be the biggest industry in most of the world's cities. According to a study published by the UN Development Programme, one in three of the world's urban residents grows food. Urban agriculture provides an estimated 15 per cent of the world's food. Governments and international development agencies are waking up to this fact and seeking to promote it. Health risks posed by sewage-fed crops have been overestimated in the past; the main concern now is heavy-metals contamination.

New Scientist, Vol 150 No 2034

Leg up

In response to criticisms that House Republicans are sacrificing the environment to benefit their corporate funders, Newt Gingrich created the Republican Task Force on the Environment. Of the 81 members he's appointed, 38 scored zero on the 1995 ratings of legislative support for the environment put out by the League of Conservation Voters. A further 19 scored below 15 per cent. Gingrich seems to be practising 'affirmative action for the environmentally impaired'.

The Nation, Vol 262 No 19

Signs of the times

A survey of people in Australia, Germany, India, Japan, Britain and the US has found that the symbols for the multinationals McDonalds and Shell are more easily identified than the universal Christian symbol of the cross. Topping the recognizability league were the Olympic rings – correctly interpreted by 92 per cent. Lurking at the lower reaches was the UN symbol, recognized only by a paltry 36 per cent.

Link, No 2

Music for lovers

Ferenc Kovacs, an Hungarian joke-shop owner, sells a singing condom. It uses a microchip that tunes up as the condom is unrolled. 'I have now taken out an international patent and am looking for a manufacturer,' says Kovacs. In line with the country's new-found democracy, there will be two tunes to choose from: 'Arise Ye Workers' (an old communist ditty) and 'You Sweet Little Dumb-bell'.

AP

Security scare

In Britain the heads of ten of the country's largest insurance companies have secretly met to explore ways for their industry to take over responsibilties from the welfare state. The group met at the request of the Conservative Government and discussed education, healthcare, legal costs, unemployment cover, pensions and long-term care.

Consumer bodies are deeply uneasy at this latest development in the Government's dismantling of the welfare state. Sally Witcher, director of the Child Poverty Action Group, warns: 'The greater the risk you are, the less likely you are to get cover and the more expensive the policies become... And you have to ask who is best placed to guarantee security. We say governments are.'

The Observer, 30th June 1996

Negligence accounts for 60 per cent of maternal deaths in state hospitals.

PAUL ALMASY / WHO

WOMEN

Malign neglect

Reproductive rights at risk in Mexico

‘Medical murderers’ was the only way in which Maria del Refugio Santana could express her anger against the staff that attended her 21-year-old daughter’s first delivery. Refused access on the grounds that her daughter was suffering from high blood pressure, after two days of pleading for a visit she was informed that her daughter had died from complications at birth.

According to Mexico City’s Women’s Health Network (*Red por la Salud de las Mujeres del Distrito Federal*), cases of neglect and malpractice within state hospitals and medical centres are widespread, but they are frequently swept aside by official bodies as being ‘anecdotal’. Mexico’s first-ever Tribunal for the Defence of Reproductive Rights, held at the end of May, transformed anecdote into formal public denunciation. Twenty-seven women recounted negligence and abuse they had suffered within the state social-security health services to a jury of government officials, legislators, civil organizations and the National Commission on Human Rights. The most frequent accusations were that women were fitted with contraceptive devices or sterilized with neither their permission nor knowledge, usually following a delivery or a miscarriage.

The National Committee for the Study of Maternal Mortality confirmed in 1993 that a staggering 60 per cent of maternal deaths in state hospitals was due to medical negligence. While there can be no justification for gynaecological interference and abuse based on the belief that there are too many people in the world, poor facilities and overworked staff may explain, in part, the lack of communication and neglect.

The Tribunal pressed for a system of appraisal and evaluation for doctors and medical staff as well as investigations into standards of training and supervision.

A senior medical practitioner from Mexico City’s Autonomous University said: ‘I have been practising for 26 years, and there is no official body to assess whether I am, or have been, competent at my job.’

For many such as Ruth Maria Ramirez Trejo the lack of proper medical attention has already had irreversible consequences. A hysterectomy was performed on her after her first child died at birth in a state hospital. At 19 she is sterile and blames both this and the death of her baby on medical incompetence. ■

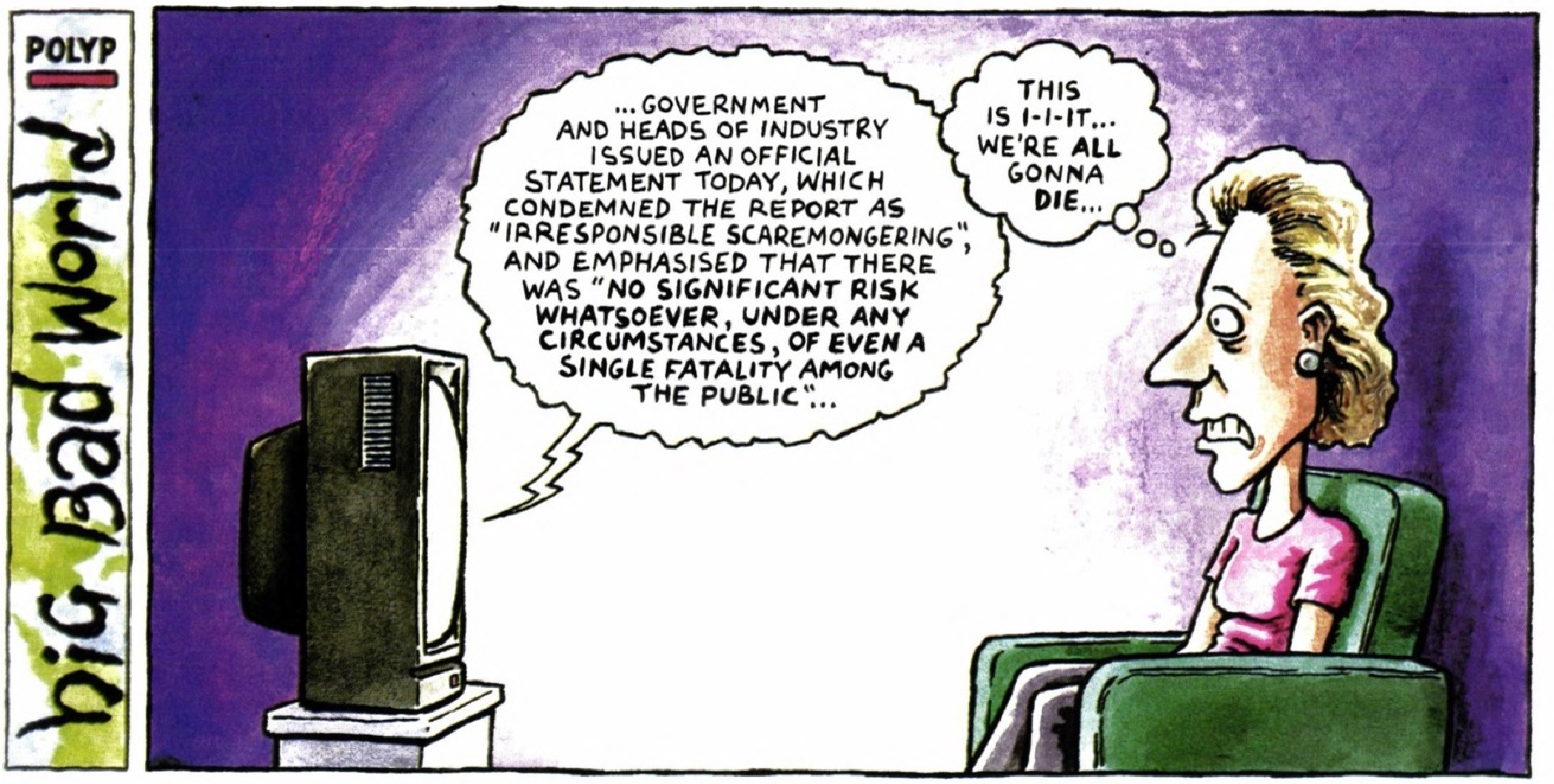
Nearly 600,000 women worldwide die every year in pregnancy and childbirth according to the first comprehensive study in a decade. Previous estimates were as much as a fifth lower than this figure.

Time Magazine, Vol 147 No 26

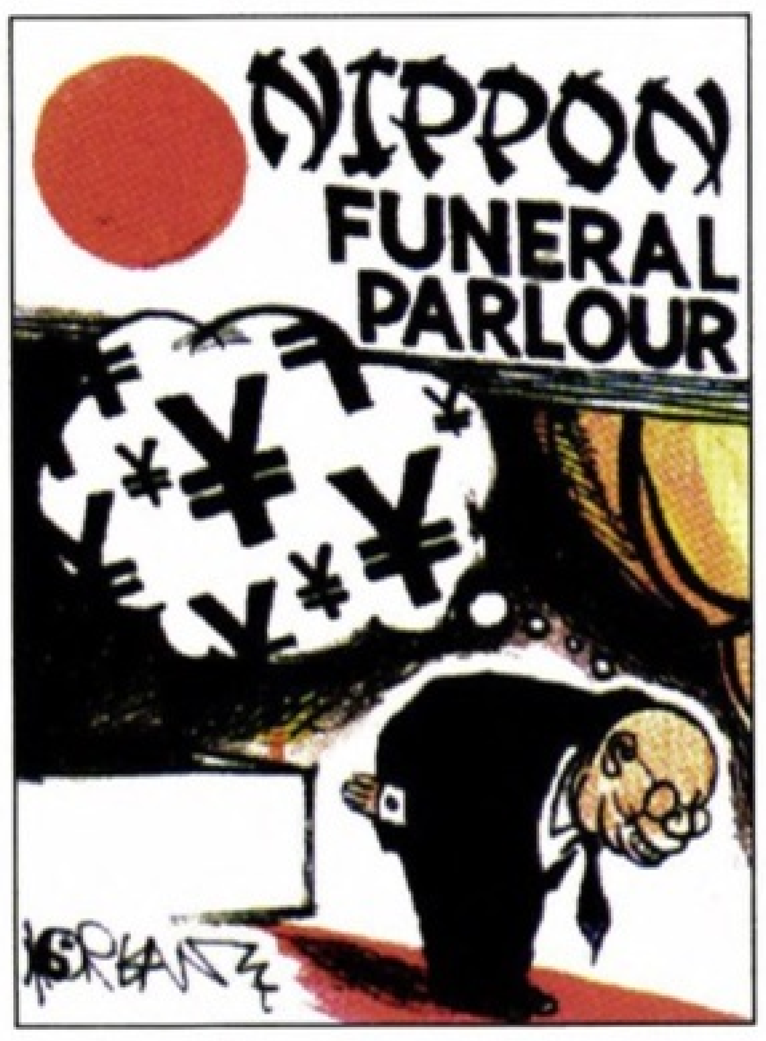
Sick

The Grilling Fields

NI reader Ian Fraser has sent us a copy of the Yorkshire Building Society’s June newsletter which has a feature on summer barbecues under the title ‘The Grilling Fields’. As Ian points out in a letter to the Chief Executive of Yorkshire Building Society: ‘If the YBS was to feature central heating as a home improvement in its magazine, would it be making flippant references to the Holocaust.... Just because the killing fields occurred on the other side of the world, in a south-east Asian, non-Western nation, is no excuse. It is not an issue of political correctness; it is an issue of racism.’


POLYP
big Bad World
...GOVERNMENT AND HEADS OF INDUSTRY ISSUED AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT TODAY, WHICH CONDEMNED THE REPORT AS "IRRESPONSIBLE SCAREMONGERING", AND EMPHASISED THAT THERE WAS "NO SIGNIFICANT RISK WHATSOEVER, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, OF EVEN A SINGLE FATALITY AMONG THE PUBLIC"...
THIS IS I-I-IT... WE'RE ALL GONNA DIE...

Update



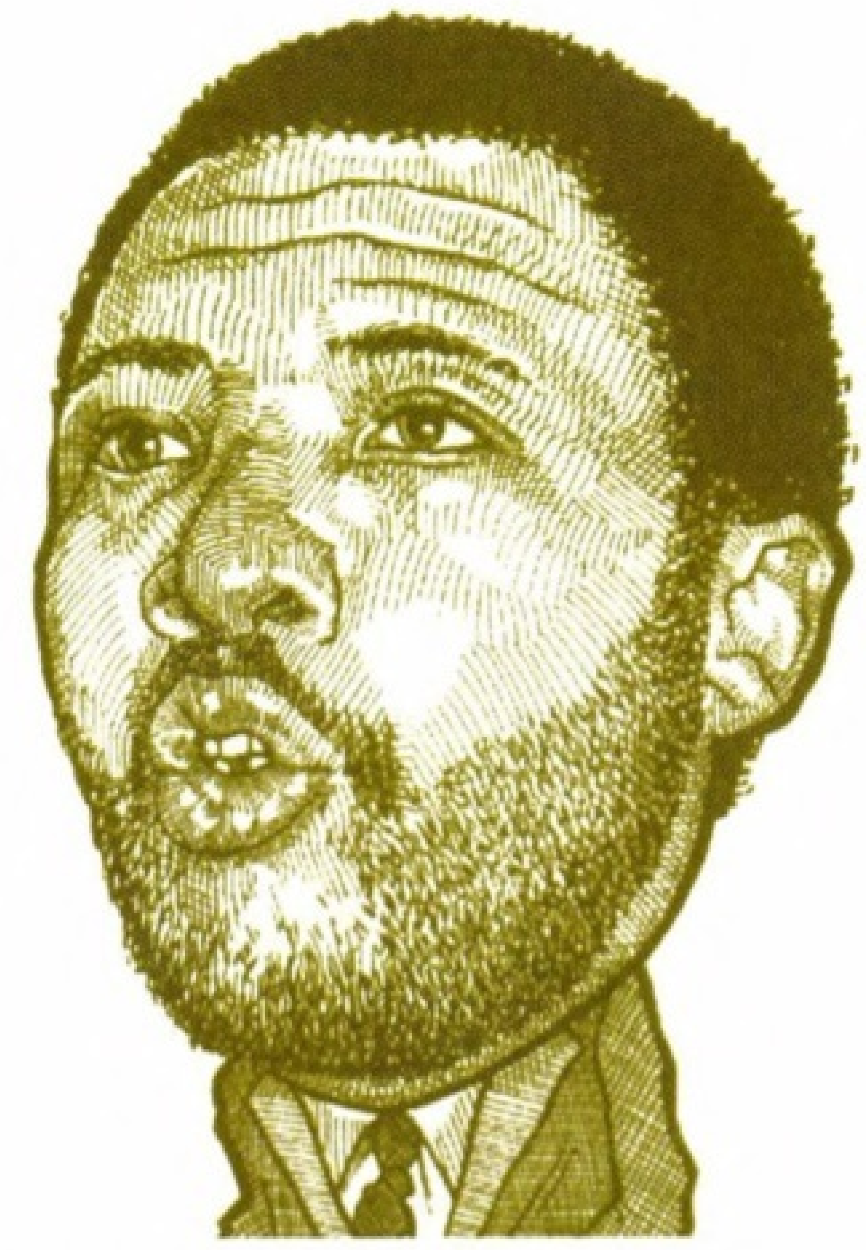
Death trade

When the chairperson of Tokyo's Hotel New Otani died last June, they festooned the ballroom, invited thousands of guests and carried in his photo for his last official function: to promote hotel-based funerals. In Japan, businesses ranging from department stores to disposable-camera makers are trying to cash in on the funeral trade. It's a growth industry, with the number of Japanese dying each year on the increase. The Japanese spend up to five million yen ($47,000) per funeral.

When graduate student Rikako Takahashi's mother died, funeral-related advertising pamphlets clogged her mailbox. Memorial homes and gravestone makers hounded her by telephone with their 'special offers'. Sales reps even followed up with home visits.

Now Koekisha, Japan's biggest funeral-service company, is getting in on the act before the event. It has started sending sales reps to companies whose ageing executives may soon need a celebrity funeral.

Far Eastern Economic Review, Vol 159 No 22



Liberia's anger

Despite six years of a civil war (fresh fighting flared up in April) that has claimed more than 150,000 lives and displaced over 1.5 million people, suggestions that Liberia should become a UN trust territory have angered civilians and democratic organizations as well as the warlords. Obviously, when Dr James Jonah (above) – special representative of the UN Secretary-General for the country – put forward the idea he didn't realize its irony in a state founded by released American slaves 150 years ago and named after their liberty.

Desmond King, Gemini

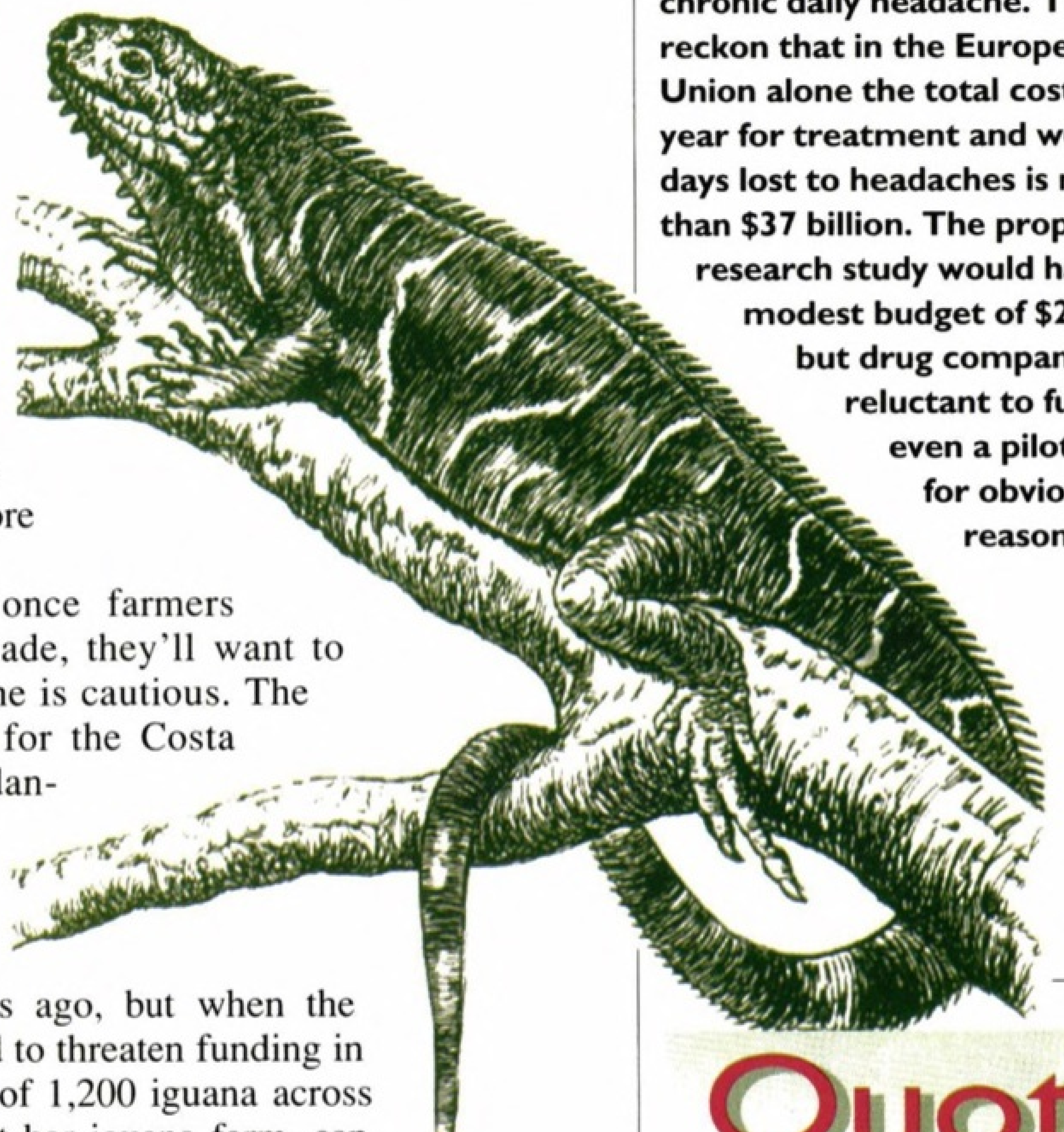
CONSERVATION

Bite on the iguana

Endangered 'Tree Chickens' farmed in Costa Rica

GERMAN biologist Dr Dagmar Werner is fighting to save the iguanas of Costa Rica – by encouraging people to eat them. They have been a valuable source of protein in various parts of Central and South America for 7,000 years and it is precisely because they taste so good – Costa Ricans call them *Pollo de Palo*, the 'chicken of the trees' – that they are endangered, despite government attempts to ban illegal hunting.

Werner, the brains behind an Iguana Park and breeding programme, hopes to save not only the endangered iguana, but parts of the tropical forest in which they live. Her aim is to persuade farmers to switch from cattle to iguanas. However harmless a herd of cows may appear, their hooves churn up what is left of forest ecosystems after slash-and-burn ranchers have cleared the trees. Iguanas, on the other hand, live and dine off trees. Studies by the Green Iguana Foundation, set up by Werner, show that the creatures can yield far more meat per hectare than cattle.



Werner believes that 'once farmers see there's money to be made, they'll want to start breeding them'. But she is cautious. The Park supplies just enough for the Costa Rican market. 'There is a danger,' she warns, 'that if we export we will create a market for poachers.'

She began her iguana project in Panama 13 years ago, but when the political climate there started to threaten funding in 1988, she took a lorry-load of 1,200 iguana across the border to Costa Rica. At her iguana farm, captive breeding increases the iguanas' chances of survival by 20 times, as predators are their main threat. To help boost dwindling numbers in the wild, more than 25,000 have been released from the Park in the past few months.

Nicki Solloway/Gemini

Costly headaches

The European Headache Federation (no, we haven't just invented the name) wants to launch a large study to gauge the link between over-the-counter painkiller misuse and chronic daily headache. They reckon that in the European Union alone the total cost each year for treatment and working days lost to headaches is more than $37 billion. The proposed research study would have a modest budget of $20,000, but drug companies are reluctant to fund even a pilot study, for obvious reasons. Only Glaxo Wellcome has offered some backing – but then it does not make over-the-counter analgesics. The EHF now plans to lobby research agencies such as the Medical Research Council, as well as the European Commission.

New Scientist, Vol 150 No 2033

Giddy heights

With the capping of the Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the world's tallest building is no longer Chicago's Sears Tower. The twin towers were designed by an Argentine-born American architect and constructed by a Bangladeshi workforce – earning just a few dollars a day – directed by Australian foremen and German engineers. This is the first time since the gothic cathedrals were built that the world's tallest building is not in the West.

Aliran Monthly, No 16 (3)

Quote

'But don't forget, the Gandhis kept Congress alive in 1984 and 1991 by dying.'

Indian political scientist **Ashis Nandy**, qualifying his comment that charismatic leaders could revive the fortunes of the Congress Party.

Field of dreams

Nikki van der Gaag sets out for Ikafe, a Sudanese refugee settlement in northern Uganda. The plan is to spend three weeks there and to write a whole issue of the **NI** about the lives of the refugees. But fate – in the form of Colonel Juma Oris's rebels – steps in and plans begin to go awry...

'CALLING November Base. Come in November Base. This is Mobile 12. Over.'

'Hello. This is November Base. How are you? Over.'

'Fine. How is the road? Over.'

'Not good I'm afraid. A landmine has exploded on the Koboko-Ladonga Road. Find out what you can at your end and we will speak at three.'

'Copied. Three this afternoon. Standing by.'

The radio crackled and went dead. We looked at each other gloomily. More delays. Issa, the driver, swung the vehicle round and back onto the road.

We had been waiting for three days now to get to the Ikafe refugee settlement located a couple of hours' drive to the north near the Uganda-Sudan border. I had arrived at Entebbe airport on Thursday morning, expecting to head off to Ikafe the next day. But that was not to be. Instead I was immediately put on a ten-seater plane

GETTING THERE

OXFAM
Working for a Fairer World

Radio on: Hope, Oxfam's only woman driver in Ikafe, waits for the signal to go.

straight to Arua, the nearest large town to Ikafe (see map page 11).

As the plane came down I could make out houses and mud huts. People were walking or biking down the road carrying huge bundles on their heads. Goats grazed, tiny moving specks of brown and black. The colours were startling: from the blues pinks, yellows and reds of women's clothes to the bright green of the trees and grass and the ochre-red of the road.

We flew over a football field and finally bumped down in Arua. I breathed a secret sigh of relief as the wheels hit the runway. A small crowd was waiting beside a tiny house, and I was whisked off in a white Landrover whose enormous radio aerial could have graced any major communications centre.

It was presumably via that same radio that the first news of the hijacking had come earlier that day. Two trucks and two Landrovers had been taken by unknown rebels, the occupants of the latter forced to march for a hour and a half not knowing what was going to happen to them.

It turned out that the rebels were an anti-Government group known as the West Bank Nile Front. They were led by a Colonel Juma Oris, who had been in Idi Amin's army, but seemed to be backed by the Sudanese Government in Khartoum. They had come over the border from Sudan at Midigo the night before and had been planting landmines along their route. Rumour had it that they had also slit one man's throat.

We spent a lot of time in Issa's Landrover over the next few days, radioing Ikafe and back to the capital, Kampala, for news and for permission to move. We got to know the best radio reception spots – and so did all the little boys in the area, who lounged around listening to our strange conversations until they were shooed off, giggling.

On the Saturday morning we heard that an Italian aid worker had taken one of the roads that we had been planning to take. His Landrover hit a mine and he was now in Arua hospital. We drove frantically round trying to find out what had happened and finally found the watchman at the aid agency's office. 'Director in hospital,' he said grimly. 'He hurt his foot.' He made a dramatic slashing gesture at his own leg: 'Off.'

That night we listened in the small hours to radios buzzing and trucks revving away. The next morning an army Lieutenant-Colonel staying at our hotel (the White Rhino Hotel, though there was not a rhino in sight beyond the painted ones on the hotel wall) told us there had been a 'major offensive' against the rebels in the night. Eighteen had been killed and nine captured. I prayed that the noises we had heard hadn't been the nine being questioned.

We now had permission to go and soon set off down the road to Ikafe, promising to radio in to November Base every half hour. We met few other vehicles on the road, just curious children waving and neat grass huts in immaculately-swept compounds.

The journey took just over two hours. En route we stopped at Yumbe, a town with a huge mosque – the Ugandans in the area are mainly Muslim – and many broken-down brick houses. 'They were destroyed during the war of 1979 when Amin was defeated and no-one can afford to rebuild them,' said Issa.

Idi Amin, under whose presidency hundreds of thousands of Ugandans were murdered, came from this area. The forces which came in after his regime fell wreaked a terrible revenge on the local people. The area has been neglected by central Government ever since.

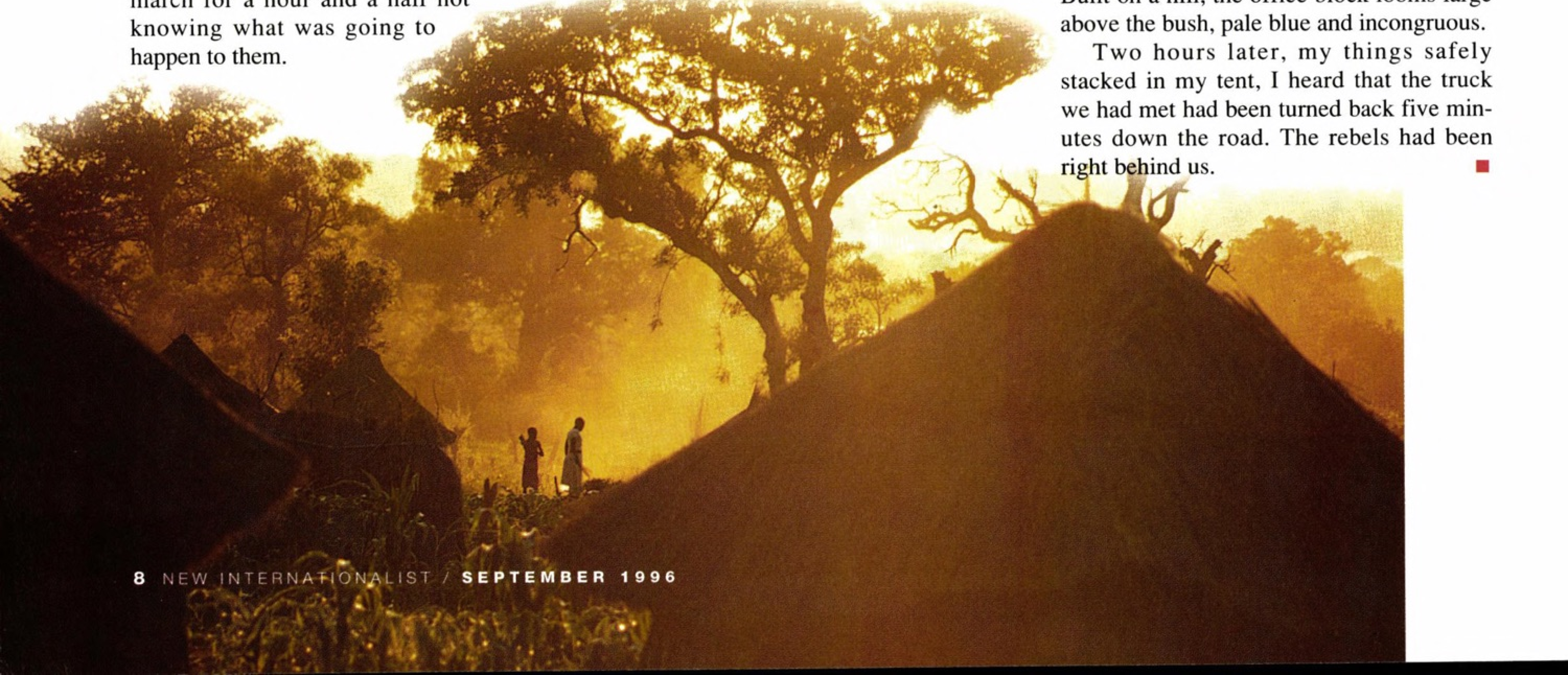
After Yumbe a truck passed us going the other way. It was full of young men, all standing up in the back. The driver waved and Issa waved back. 'That's Gideon, from Ikafe,' he said. 'And here,' he waved vaguely to the left, 'is where the settlement begins.'

Ikafe didn't conform to my image of a refugee camp at all

I could see nothing that marked it off from the rest of the countryside. It didn't seem like a refugee camp – or at least not the images I had of a camp – at all. There were the same neatly thatched grass and mud huts (*tukuls*), the same children waving. Only here and there was an area of land which had been burned or deforested. Everywhere, people were hoeing or planting; spiky maize leaves grew among smaller clover-like plants which I later found out were groundnuts.

Then we pulled into Bidibidi 'base camp'; the 'November Base' that we had been communicating with so regularly. Built on a hill, the office block looms large above the bush, pale blue and incongruous.

Two hours later, my things safely stacked in my tent, I heard that the truck we had met had been turned back five minutes down the road. The rebels had been right behind us. ■



Tents, trees and tukuls

Arrival at November Base; working out how Ikafe is structured and an encounter with some unexpected wildlife...

I SOON FOUND OUT that a tent has distinct disadvantages as long-term accommodation. During the day, it's an oven, baking clothes and bedding and turning facecream and suntan lotion into glutinous oily masses. At night it is freezing. I would huddle under my blankets, shivering, hoping that my mosquito net protected me from the wildlife that I could hear above, below and all around.

The first night it rained and I was woken abruptly by the floor moving up and down, with strange noises coming from underneath it. I remembered all the stories I had been told about snakes and scorpions and rats nibbling your fingers and hair and sat bolt upright.

I turned on my flashlight and shone it around. It soon alighted on a small frog, jumping frantically against the sides of the tent and falling back as it failed to get out.

I decided to brave the world outside my mosquito net, lifted up the flap and pushed the frog outside. But I still hadn't dealt with its larger companion underneath the floor, which continued to move up and down alarmingly. By the time I got back into bed I was exhausted enough to be able to ignore everything until I was woken at 5.30 am by a noise from the next-door tent. It was the BBC World Service broadcasting an incongruous programme about the protection of Greek monuments.

Refugees, I thought, have to live like this for months, sometimes years, before their houses are built; whole families squashed under a plastic sheet – and no mosquito nets. My admiration increased over the weeks as I encountered moths as big as birds, irascible and determined rats, and finally, after the rains, the big black scorpions that everyone had told me about. A sting from one, I was told, would leave you in relentless agony for at least 24 hours.

Most of the staff in Ikafe had also lived in tents when the settlement was first set up some two years ago. Now, like the majority of the established refugees, they had built cool mud *tukuls*.

Bidibidi – which is what 'November Base' is really called – is one of the five such 'camps' within the settlement. The others are Yoyo, Iyete, South Base and Imvepi (see map page 11). Imvepi is one of two new extensions to main Ikafe, the other being called, prosaically, Northern Extension.

They are all lived in by the Oxfam workers, mostly Ugandans, who work as drivers, food distribution and registration assistants, mechanics, water engineers, cooks, surveyors, registration people, public health promoters and community development workers, as well as office and management staff. Each base camp has its own (noisy) generator, but I was interested to see that offices also had solar panels.

There are few Sudanese in the base camps, partly because Ugandan law makes it difficult to get a work permit for a foreigner if they earn over a certain salary. Sudanese *are* employed in lower-paid positions but they live in the settlement with the rest of the refugees. It seems work permits are as difficult to get in Uganda as they are anywhere else.

I found it odd at first that 'staff' should be separated in this way from refugees, but realised later that it was at least partly for security reasons. Even while I was there, a curfew between six in the evening and nine in the morning restricted movement outside each of the base camps. (I heard later that in some refugee camps in Rwanda the aid agency staff live a couple of hours' drive from the refugees.)

Breakfast at Bidibidi – queuing for meals in the *pyoti*. They are a mainly male affair, eaten standing up.

NIKKI VAN DER GAAG

Bidibidi stands on a hill which dominates the surrounding area, with stunning views of the bush stretching to the mountains of Zaire – and a fence all around. As well as the large office building, there are three brick houses, garage and storage facilities and twenty or more *tukuls* for staff and their families.

This, and the fact that the workers are mainly male, contributed to my sense of being in a military camp. In the evenings the camp workers gather in the central *pyoti* or meeting house after they have eaten to watch videos – or play scrabble. The couple of times I tried the latter I found that Fred, the camp manager, and his team-mate, Daoudi, who is responsible for public

Seedlings and smiling faces: children are eager to show off the trees that they are about to plant.

health, had an amazing knack of scoring astronomically high points by using very few letters. They always won, whoever they were playing.

Such gatherings were nearly always men-only. It was noticeable that the men brought their wives with them, but that the female workers left their children with relatives in their home towns and lived in Ikafe on their own. Those men with families presumably spent the evenings at home in their *tukuls*.

When I asked Beatrice, an Ugandan public health worker, about this, she said simply that she didn't feel Bidibidi was a place to bring up children. Beatrice's four children – Wendy, Andrew, Abel and Karin – were at school in Arua, so whenever she could get a lift she would go home to see them.

Ikafe is a settlement rather than a camp, where refugees are given land to grow things on...

By contrast, in the refugee settlement itself there were children everywhere: small shy ones who burst into tears at the sight of a white woman, bolder ones who came up and waved hello, and children of all shapes and sizes sitting on stools under trees, their heads bent in concentration over their school books. By the end of my stay, those in the area nearest to Bidibidi Base Camp would call out: 'Hello, Nikki!' whenever I walked or cycled past – which I did often since the nearest refugees lived a couple of kilometres away. If I wanted to see refugees in the southern part of the settlement I had to hitch a lift on a vehicle and drive for an hour.

Ikafe covers an area of more than 500 square kilometres. The land was given by local people to the Government of Uganda in 1993 when the longstanding war between the Sudanese Government in the North and the peoples of southern Sudan escalated once again and Government planes shelled civilian areas (see pages 26-27). Thousands of people fled to Uganda. They were initially settled in Koboko and then moved to Ikafe where there are now 53,000 refugees along with the 4,000 existing Ugandan residents and 165 Oxfam contract staff and their families.

Ikafe's size is mainly due to the fact that is a 'settlement' rather than a 'camp'. The distinction being that because the refugees are likely to be there for a while, they are given some land to grow things on. The hope is that one day – if they haven't been able to return home – they might be self-reliant.

Along with food, buckets and blankets, each refugee family is given a piece of land, tools and seeds. Unlike the standard media image of refugees squeezed like sardines into crowded makeshift tent cities, the refugees in Ikafe are very spread out. People live in family compounds which consist of four or five *tukuls* – there are different huts for different uses. One is a bedroom, one is a kitchen, another is a room to sit in. Smaller constructions are used as a pit latrine, a chicken coop and a place to wash. Sometimes the land being farmed is nearby, sometimes it is far away. But everywhere you go there is greenness, and sometimes even a profusion of flowers.

It took a while before I worked out how the settlement was structured – 24 family compounds are organized into a 'Block' and three to five Blocks make up a 'village'. Several villages grouped together are a 'Point' and several 'Points' make a zone. Each Point is given a letter of the alphabet, so there is Point E or Point M or Point S. I found this confusing at first, particularly as most villages and zones also had names which the refugees had given them – often towns in Africa or even mountains and special places back home in Sudan.

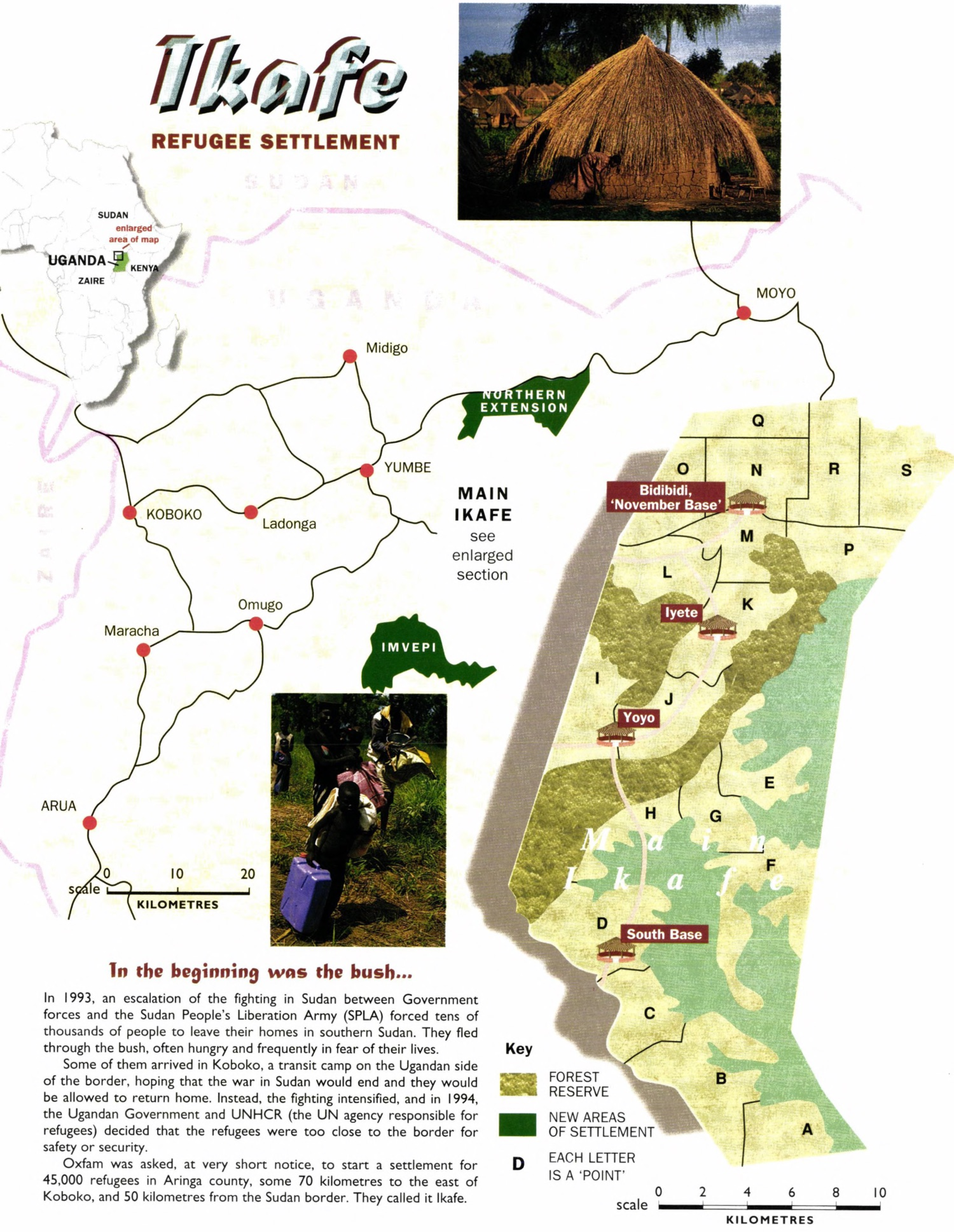
To add to the confusion the zones and base camps often have the same name: Bidibidi or Yoyo or Iyete. And people introduce themselves not only by their given names but by their block and point: 'I am Sarah, Block C, Point I.' Or sometimes by the name of the zone: 'Point J, Yoyo.'

I found the subject of names endlessly fascinating. Because most southern Sudanese are Christian, many have 'Christian' names: Raymond, Peter, Grace or Mary. Then they might have a name which indicates the state in which they came into the world: 'Born in Exile' or 'Jealousy' (if their parents weren't getting on at the time). And finally, they take their father's first name. Ugandans, who in this area are mainly Muslim, have a similar structure; they first names are Muslim: Kassim or Fatima, and then they have the two other names; their given name and their father's. They might have a nickname as well. Women generally don't change their name once they are married.

Ikafe itself is named after a tree that grows in the south of the settlement. Although many trees have been cut down to make room for the refugees, there are two tree nurseries growing replacements. I went one day to see a tree-planting session. Jenny Matthews, who was taking the photos for this issue, came with me. Several men, a number of children (who were waiting for a Catholic catechism session) and a woman called Martha were busily digging holes and planting a range of different trees. When the children shyly held up the young saplings to show us, their roots wrapped in black plastic, I couldn't help smiling. They seemed such clear symbols of hope and renewal, as much for the children as for the local environment. ■

Ikafe

REFUGEE SETTLEMENT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NEW AREAS OF SETTLEMENT
D EACH LETTER IS A 'POINT'
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In the beginning was the bush...

In 1993, an escalation of the fighting in Sudan between Government forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) forced tens of thousands of people to leave their homes in southern Sudan. They fled through the bush, often hungry and frequently in fear of their lives.

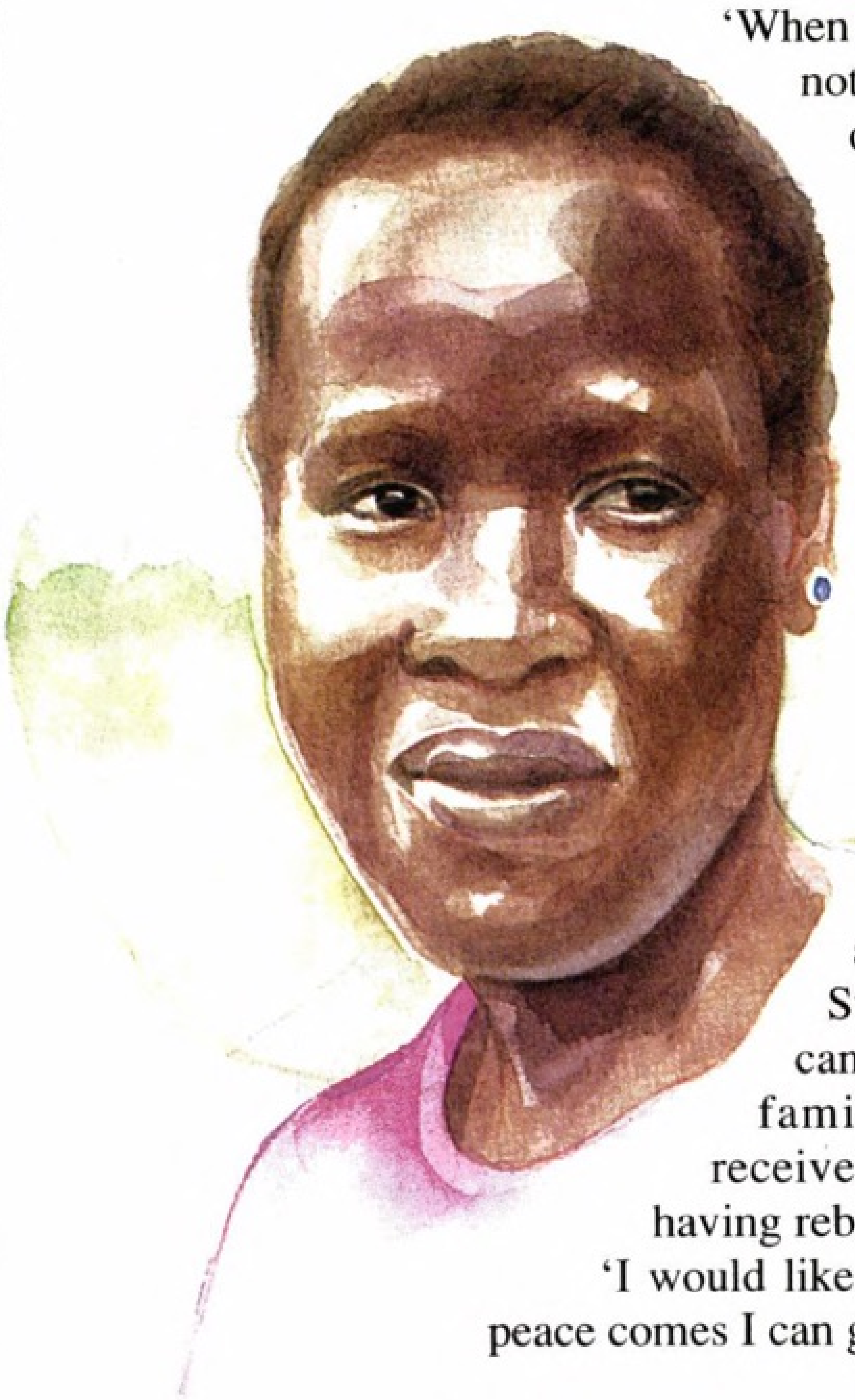
Some of them arrived in Koboko, a transit camp on the Ugandan side of the border, hoping that the war in Sudan would end and they would be allowed to return home. Instead, the fighting intensified, and in 1994, the Ugandan Government and UNHCR (the UN agency responsible for refugees) decided that the refugees were too close to the border for safety or security.

Oxfam was asked, at very short notice, to start a settlement for 45,000 refugees in Aringa county, some 70 kilometres to the east of Koboko, and 50 kilometres from the Sudan border. They called it Ikafe.

Everyone can tell you exactly when they became a refugee. From the youngest child to the oldest woman, they will say: 'It was April 23rd' or 'I ran from my home on January 2nd'. They then go on to tell you of relatives and friends killed or left behind when they fled the bombing of their homes in Sudan by Government troops and of long and arduous journeys through the bush.

Living in exile changes people. They have to start again from scratch. It becomes important to believe that one day you will return, and to treasure rosy memories of how things were 'back home'.

Cecilia



'When the shelling started in April 1990, I was not at home. I was studying at the College of Adult Education and Training in Juba. I had to run in just the clothes I stood up in, not knowing where the rest of my family were or what had happened to them. On the way I saw many horrible things – five small children, burnt black. Horrible. I ran through the bush. I stayed for three days without food.

'Like many other people, I carried my certificates and important documents with me wherever I went. I taped them to my body – just in case. So when I came here I was able to show my qualifications and to get a job as a Community Support Officer for Health here in the camp. But life is hard...I can't contact my family because I know that people who receive letters from abroad can be accused of having rebel connections.

'I would like to go to America to get training so that if peace comes I can go and assist my people.'

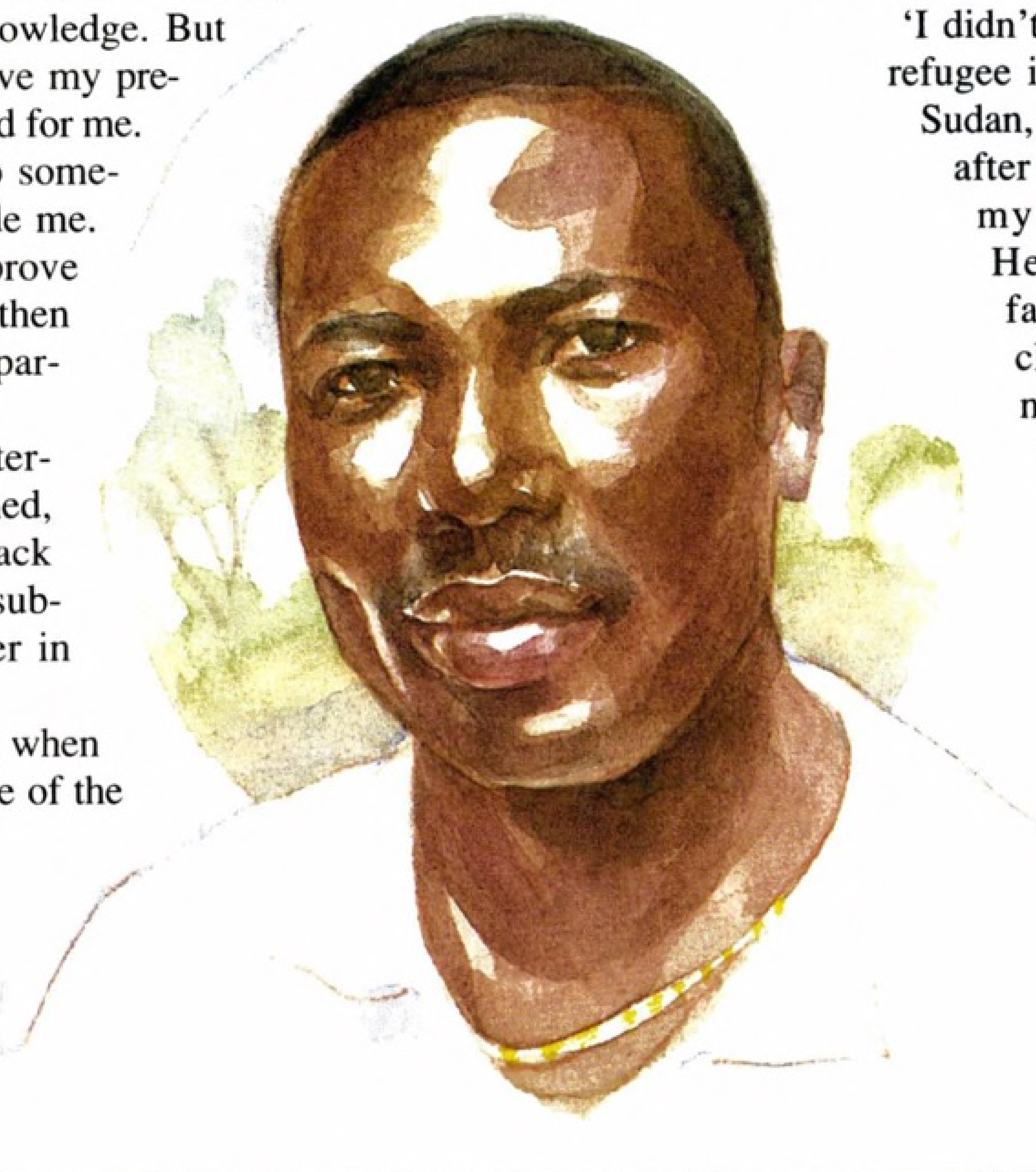
Theodor

'The worst thing for me has been leaving my books behind. Wherever I went, I took some books with me. I wanted to increase my knowledge. But because I was having to move so much I often had to leave my precious books; just dump them under a tree. This was very hard for me.

'I have been revolutionized by my exile. I have to do something. I cannot keep quiet – something has changed inside me. If I can get the opportunity I will do some studies to improve my language so that I can try to express my ideas. Maybe then I will be able to do something very good for all people, particularly for the people of south Sudan.

'I have come to understand that refugee life means determination. It is not an easy thing. If you are not determined, you may find yourself deciding that it is better to go back and stay in Government-held territories even if you are subject to so many atrocities. For me, I would rather suffer in exile than stay in my country being oppressed.

'I will only go back to Sudan when there is true peace; when the Government in Khartoum signs a peace with the people of the South. Until then I will have to remain a refugee.'



Gordon Soro

Gordon Soro's name is pronounced 'Sorrow', but he is the least sorrowful man I know. When I met him, he had just walked from his home to the base camp to meet me – a journey which had taken him two hours in the glaring African sun. And yet, at the age of 79, he seemed completely unfazed, accepting as a matter of course the lunch I brought him as he rested in the cool of the office block and told me a little about his life:

'When the fighting started in 1993 and they came to get me, I refused to leave my home. You see, I had been a refugee before, in 1964, and I knew what it was like.

In 1964 I had been lucky. I was saved by the latrine. The army came and ambushed my house where I was sitting. I heard shooting, so I ran to the latrine inside my house – the soldiers were shooting at the windows. They came in search for me, but I locked the door of the latrine and they thought there was nobody there. And so when they went away, I escaped to Zaire.'

Gordon grins broadly and chuckles again at the memory of his narrow escape. 'This time, I was going to have to be dragged from my home before I would leave. So when everyone else was running to Uganda and they came and said to me: "What are you doing here? Everyone else has left. It is eight days now and you are still here. Come away!", I said: "No!" So they said: "But you cannot stay here on your own, an old man without wife or children. Who will feed you? Who is going to look after you?" (At this point Gordon Soro pursed his lips, remembering). "Well," I said. "I am going to look after myself!." But they told me this was impossible and they pulled me into a car and brought me to Uganda.

'I didn't like it. You see, to be a refugee is very uncomfortable. In Sudan, I had my family to look after me, my pension money, my work as a magistrate. Here, I worry about my family outside. I have no clothes, no piece of soap, nothing to eat, no proper food. I don't like it. I said to the people who came to take me away in Sudan: "It would be better to stay, to die here rather than to suffer there." But they wouldn't listen.

'So I came to Uganda, to Koboko transit camp, I came with two grown-up married daughters, one unmarried daughter and a young son. I left the rest of my family behind in Sudan.

You see, when people ran from Sudan, they did not usually come in family groups. They were running for their lives. They came with nothing – if they tried to bring anything with them it was taken or looted and sold by the soldiers.

So when we came to the transit camp we were supposed to stay with our families. But this was already difficult. Then, suddenly, we were put on lorries and brought here to Ikafe. Often families that had been reunited were separated again.

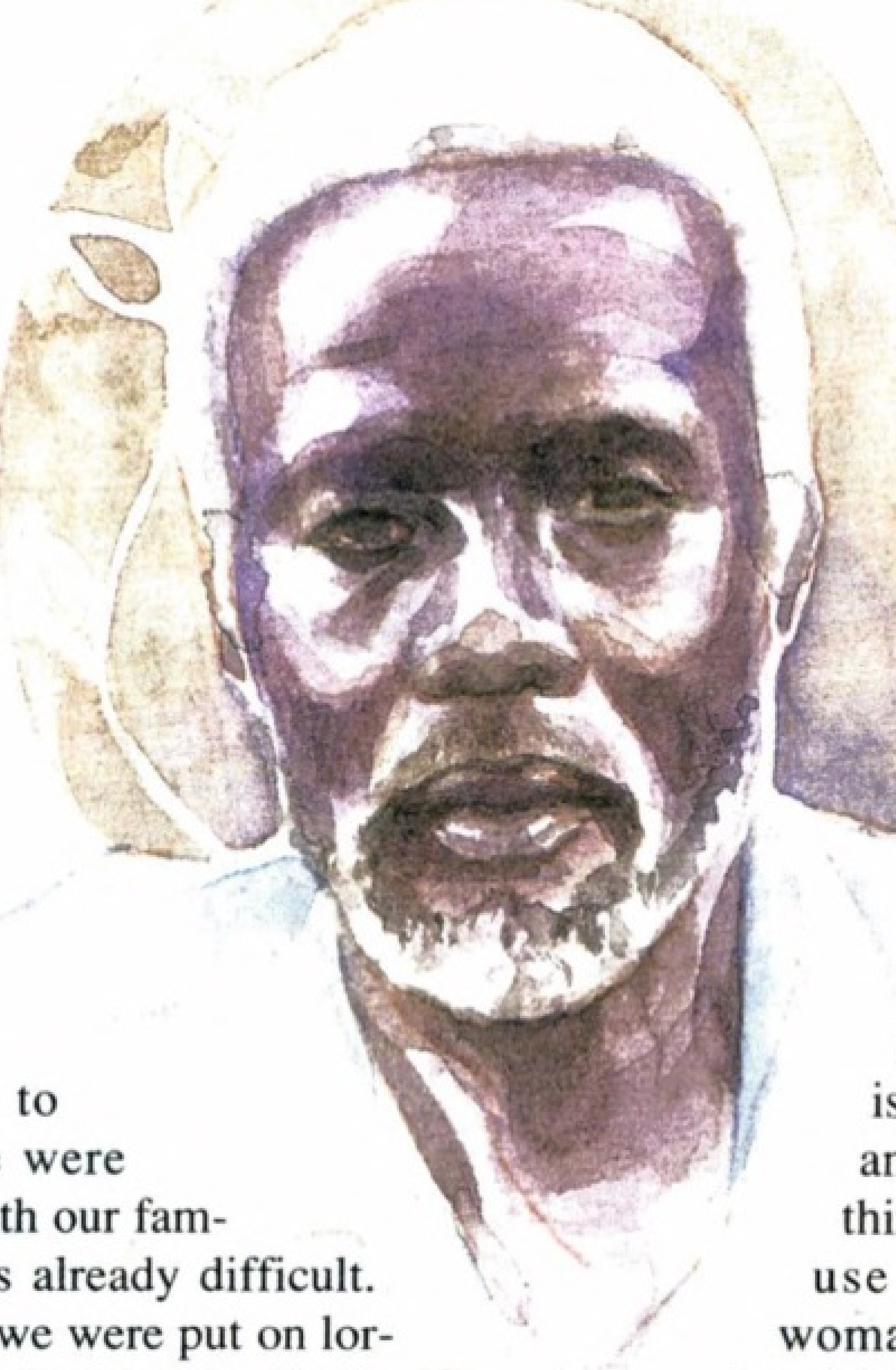
For example, I have just found out that my two married daughters, whom I was with in Koboko, are now here in Ikafe. But one is in the far north of the settlement and the other is in the new area called Imvepi. She has been there for about a month, but it is two hours' drive from here – and I have only my feet!' He leaned forward conspiratorially 'You see, I am hoping to find someone here who is going to Imvepi – I heard that someone might be going tomorrow.'

But there was no transport for the following few days due to rebel activity in the area. Gordon didn't go home but simply sat and waited, as close as he could to where the trucks and Landrovers left.

His patience was rewarded on the Thursday when the all-clear was given. I decided to hitch a ride with him in the back of the Landrover.

We bumped along the road, on the look-out for any rebel activity, but met none. When we finally reached Imvepi I asked Gordon if he knew where his daughter lived. It was a big area. 'No,' he said, sitting down in the shade and sipping some water. 'But someone will have a list with her name on it. I will wait.'

And so I left him not long after, an old man with a determined heart, waiting for information that would lead him at last to his daughter's home.



Johnson: 'I am a Dinka. The war in Sudan began in our area. So we left and crossed the border to Uganda. We had no vehicles. We were just using our feet to travel. These journeys take many weeks. Sometimes we travelled in the heat of the sun, sometimes in heavy rain. We used to try and walk at night when it was cooler, and sleep under trees by day. Even the children walked. There was no food, and our cattle had been lost, killed during the exchange of fire between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Government troops.

'The Dinka are a semi-nomadic people, and having to stay in one place without moving is very difficult for us. We also miss our cattle and their milk and their meat. There are many things we have had to change. For example, we use cattle for dowry. The man will give the woman's family many cattle in exchange for her hand in marriage. But now we have no cattle. We are trying to solve this problem. One way is the system of marriage on credit. The husband promises to pay the dowry when there is peace is Sudan...

'But for the moment it means that there are fewer marriages. And we need young people to get married so that they can have children to replace all those who have died in Sudan. For every 50 people who come we want there to be 100 to go back!

'There is another change. You see the marks on Martina's forehead? And her two bottom teeth which have been removed? This is something we do when a person reaches puberty. It is a tradition of our people. It has always been done. But now it is forbidden for children to have this done, under pain of death. It is forbidden both in Sudan and here. It marks us out too much. It is just too dangerous.'

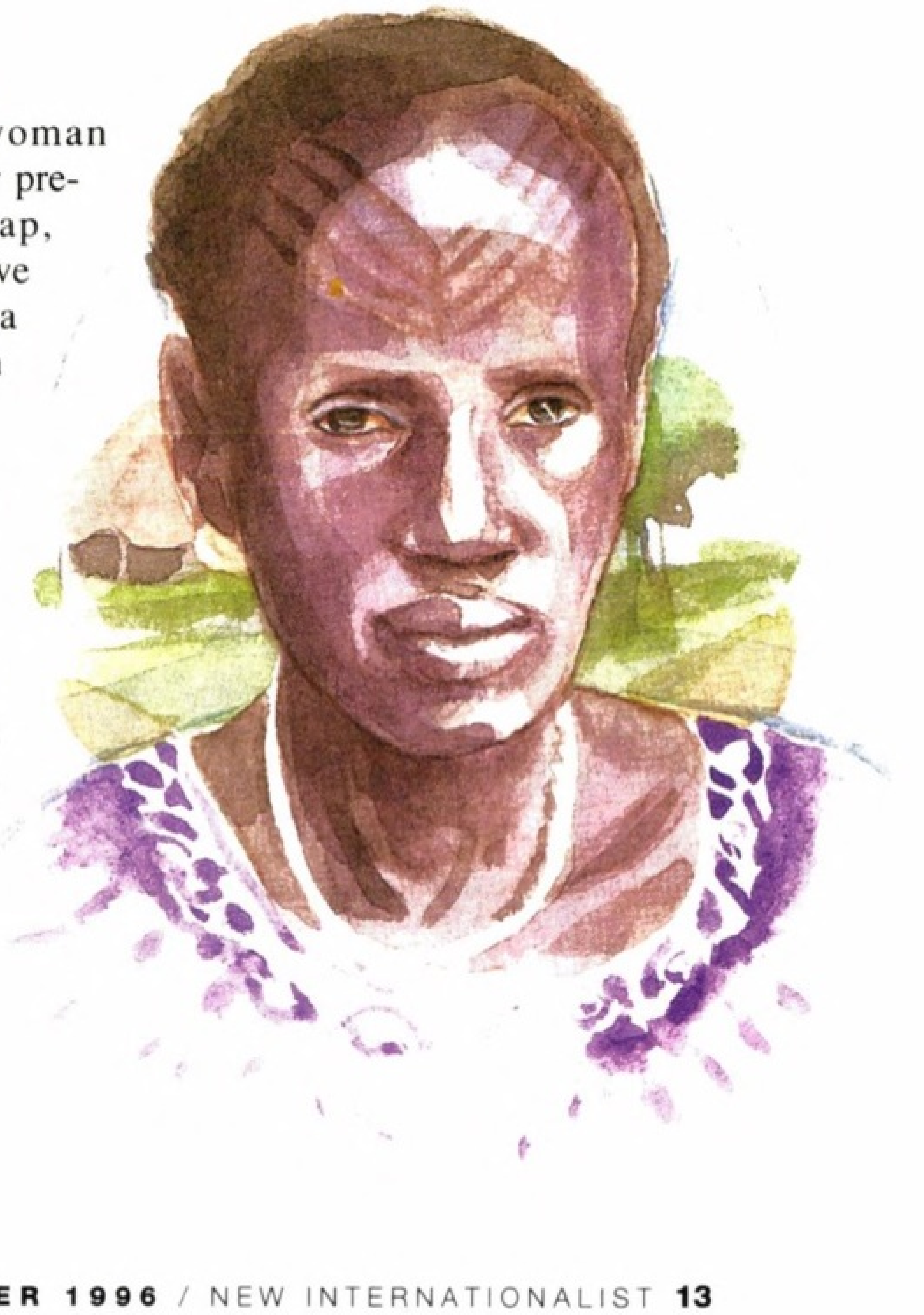
ILLUSTRATIONS BY SARAH JOHN

Martina

'In Sudan, when a woman gives birth, we bring her presents, special food, soap, clothes for the baby. Here we cannot do this. Also when a baby dies these things can comfort her. She can share her feelings with the Women's Association. In Sudan, if there is any problem women gather together and sit in one place and discuss it.

'Here, when a woman loses a child – as one did only two days ago – I can call other women and we can talk and discuss with her as we did in Sudan, but we have nothing we can give her, nothing we can do to comfort her.

'See my child here – he is naked! (and she gestured at the child clinging to her skirt, wearing only a necklace of blue beads) When the weather is cold this can affect the child – he can get sick with bronchitis. It was not like this in Sudan. We had milk, meat, clothes, many things...'



Food and fair shares

In most places, food is distributed to refugees as a handout. They have little say in the process. But here in Ikafe, something different is happening – which puts the refugees in charge of getting their own rations.

THE man shakes his fist in my face. He is tall and white-haired with rectangular glasses and an air of authority. 'There is a big problem here. We are supposed to get 15 kilos of maize and you have only given us 13.5. How are we supposed to survive on this for a month? You say it has been replaced with sugar, but we only have a tiny amount of sugar. This cannot replace the maize. What are you going to do about it?'

Next to me, Peter al Haj, the youthful camp chairperson at Point J, near Yoyo Base Camp, murmurs rather sadly. 'This will be the first time I have tasted sugar since I came to this camp a year ago. Can you imagine – not even sugar in tea.' And he looks wistful.

The midday sun pounds down on our heads and makes me feel dizzy. We are in the middle of a food distribution. A combination of bureaucratic delays and the fact that the Kampala road is controlled by rebels has meant that some refugees have had no food for 15 days.

Beside me small children pick up maize grains that have dropped on the ground and squirrel them away. Maize is the staple. It is ground and cooked with water to make a dense white mixture called *posho*.

Because security may make food deliveries difficult again over the next few weeks, the refugees are supposed to be getting enough to last them a month. But the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) – which is responsible for providing Ikafe's food – has cut the amount of maize by 1.5 kilos per person. The cut reflects the fact that WFP is facing difficulties in securing food from major donors.

But here on the ground the reasons are immaterial; the fact is that the refugees have less food. And people are angry.

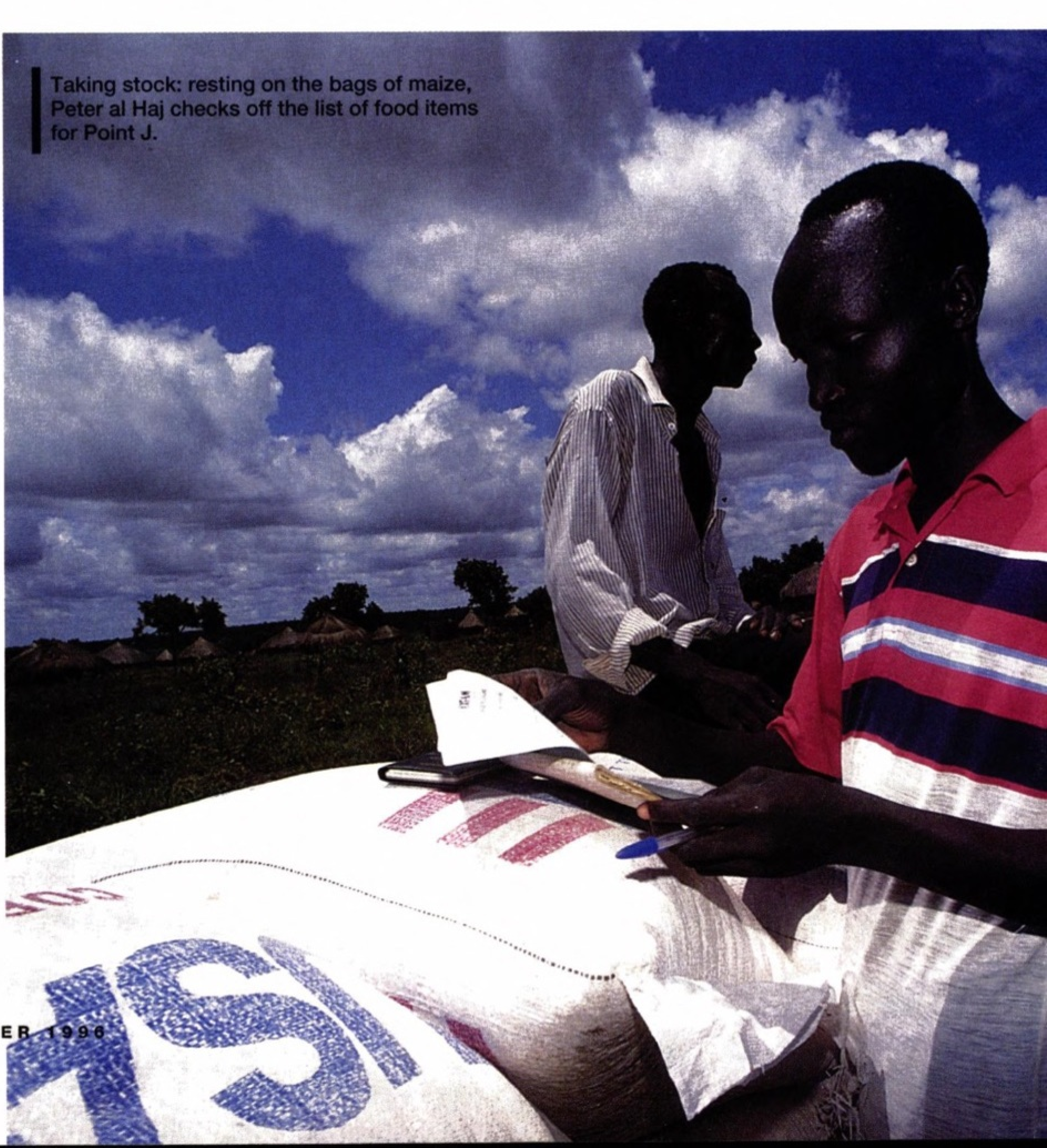
Four or five men lift the big white bags of maize and the yellow jerrycans of cooking oil off the trucks, sweat streaming down their backs. Then come the long yellow bars of soap, the bags of beans, salt and finally, the sugar. The pile of items grows and everyone watches carefully. They know that it has to last the 1,427 refugees at Point J for at least a month. They make sure that it is carefully checked and counted. When they find that one bag contains only half the amount it should, there is a discontented murmuring. They are also short of maize, so the truck soon revs up and roars off to get the remainder.

Once the food is unloaded, it is up to the refugees to distribute it. People like Betty, a tall Ugandan in a bright yellow shirt, move around, monitoring the weighing scales and dealing with any problems that arise, but the refugees are in charge.

Handing over as much control as possible to the refugees has been a guiding principle in running the camp. But it has not been without controversy: in fact it has been a constant bone of contention between Oxfam and the WFP.

I talked to Peter Muhangi, a small dapper man with a little moustache and lots of energy, who is responsible for food distribution in Ikafe.

'WFP prefers to distribute food directly to family heads, whereas we distribute it to elected refugee representatives. If you do it the WFP way then you need to employ a lot of non-refugees to hand out the food. We believe it is fairer – and cheaper – for the refugees to do it themselves. If people feel a



Taking stock: resting on the bags of maize, Peter al Haj checks off the list of food items for Point J.

chairman or woman isn't distributing fairly they can vote them out in the next elections.'

He doesn't point out another obvious advantage – if agency staff are evacuated at least the refugees would know how to distribute food themselves.

Both the Ugandan Government and Oxfam are hoping the refugees will be able to grow enough food to sustain themselves. But last year's harvest was poor because of drought, and rocky soil in many parts of the settlement makes it hard to farm even when weather conditions are good.

'In Sudan,' says Michael, a community worker in southern Ikafe, 'we ate three meals a day – breakfast at 10, lunch at two and dinner at seven. Now most people just eat one meal at midday, with perhaps a little maize porridge for breakfast.'

In some parts of Ikafe the amount of land allocated is too little to support a family. This is partly because the same amount of land was given to each family head regardless of family size. So a family of three got the same land as a family of 10. That problem has now been recognized so that in the newer areas, Imvepi and the Northern Extension, land is distributed on a per capita basis.

Elsewhere too, refugees with large families or poor land are being given extra plots. At the same time there is pressure from the Ugandan Government and UNHCR for Ikafe to take more refugees, in which case the amount of land available would inevitably shrink as more people are crammed into the same space.

Even in the best circumstances, with enough land available, there are some refugees who are unable to farm. James Anyang, a young Dinka, was shot in the foot in Sudan, and taken to Kenya where he was fitted with an artificial limb below the knee. But this has now worn out and there is no replacement. James is now on crutches. 'When these wear out,' he asks, 'What will I do then?'

But most of the refugees are growing at least some of their own food. As Theodor, my translator, pointed out: 'What you have grown in your own fields with your own hand gives you some self-esteem. To depend on someone else is not good. If we can work towards self-reliance then when at last we attain our freedom we will go back to Sudan knowing how to survive, how to build ourselves up again in a relatively short time.'

When food runs low the refugees have to find other ways of feeding themselves. I ask Grace Iata Amulu further down the road at Point I (where they are still waiting for their deliveries) how she and her husband manage: 'We do *leja-leja* (work in the fields in return for food) for the Ugandan nationals.' She waves her arm. 'My husband is over there at the moment, digging the fields. He will return with some food.' She shrugs. 'Or we go hungry.'

Back at Point J, people have abandoned their fields, at least for the duration of the distribution. Until now, the crowd has consisted mainly of men. But as Peter al Haj checks off and signs the final list, the women start to appear. They come from all sides, walking down the road and through the bush in their brightly-coloured clothes, swaying slightly to balance the assortment of empty pots, pans, old teapots and other receptacles that they carry in larger containers on their heads.

Now the food is being measured and divided up, first into piles for each village and then into smaller heaps for each 'Block'. Measuring is a problem. A large group of people is gathered around the two pairs of weighing scales, which are hung rather precariously on the branches of small trees. These are used for measuring larger items, like maize and beans; but with only two scales for everyone, it takes a long time.

'Twixt cup and lid: women distribute the smaller items like salt and oil.

Women have been given responsibility for measuring out the smaller items, particularly salt and oil: 'We do the cooking, so we know the value of each drop, each grain,' says a woman sitting on the ground with a child on her lap. The men around nod their agreement.

According to an internal Oxfam report, giving women control over food means that if they do sell their rations, it's usually to purchase salt, vegetables, meat, sugar or clothing. When men sell off their share, it is often for tobacco or alcohol.

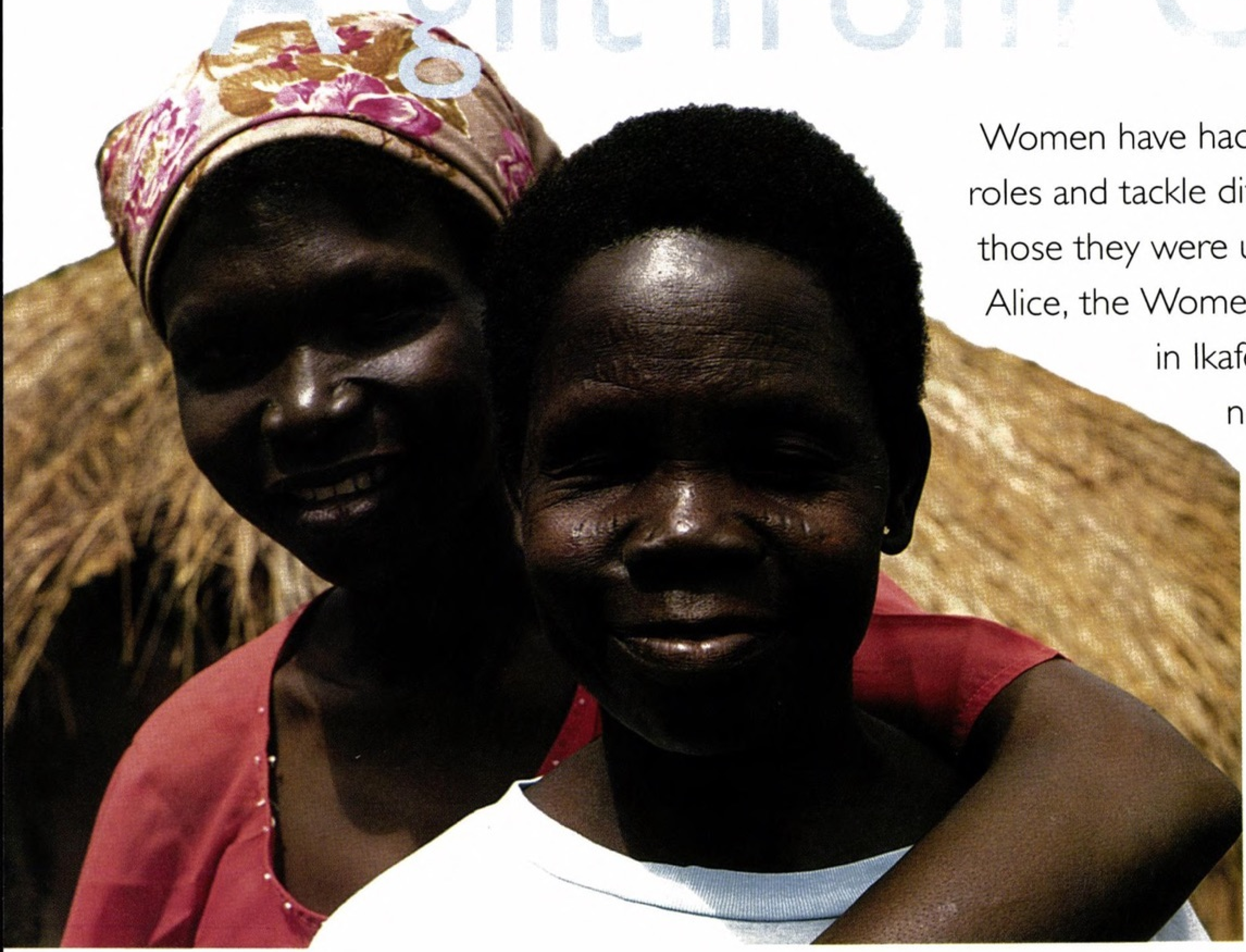
The sugar and salt for each family have to be measured out in the red lids of the jerrycans. Everywhere people are now gathered in the smaller 'Block' groups, with one person carefully apportioning the right amounts to each family. In one group, two men are waving their fists at each other and shouting. 'There is some problem over the sugar,' says the man standing next to me. 'There may be a fight.'

With several hundred people milling around the whole process looks like an ideal recipe for any number of fisticuffs. But miraculously, the problems seem to be resolved without violence. The two men are slowly calmed down by their neighbours and the allocation of food continues.

The whole process takes only a few hours from beginning to end. As each family receives and checks its full entitlement the women laboriously lift the full containers onto their heads and begin to drift away, in ones, then twos and threes and finally in little processions, carrying home their booty in the assortment of receptacles that are now heavy and filled to the brim with the next month's nourishment. ■

A gift from God

Women have had to take on new roles and tackle different tasks from those they were used to in Sudan. Alice, the Women's Representative in Ikafe, and Lona, her neighbour, explain how things have changed and the effect this has had on their own lives.



Friends and neighbours; Alice (left) and Lona share a quiet moment.

'ALICE Abau Elia?' we asked an old man sitting in the shade of his doorway. 'That way,' he gestured. A small boy was more specific: 'She lives at the end of the village. Just keep going.' So we pushed our bikes between *tukuls* until finally we arrived at Alice's house.

She greeted us enthusiastically but seemed a bit distracted. I got the impression that she was busy doing something else, though she was far too polite to say so. We waited for some time while she disappeared inside her kitchen. A little girl of about eight, Alice's eldest daughter, Beatrice, came and greeted us.

An hour or so later Alice re-appeared with some tea and groundnuts and sat down with us in the shade of the one tree in her courtyard. I realized that what seemed a simple snack had involved a lot of hard work, collecting the wood to make the fire, heating up the water, using some of her precious tea and equally precious sugar and maybe even getting the groundnuts from somewhere else. I noticed that the tea was only for Theodor and me. Alice and Lona, her neighbour who had joined us, ate and drank nothing.

The place seemed strangely silent and I wondered why. Alice explained that there were few people around:

'The rations arrived yesterday. So my sister's boys have taken the maize to the grinding mill and everyone is very busy. Please, drink your tea. Have some sugar.'

Alice is the Women's Representative on Ikafe's Refugee Council and I had come to talk to her about women in Sudanese society and in the settlement. How had things changed since coming to Ikafe? We had been laughing and joking but suddenly Alice grew serious and leaned towards me:

'There are many women here with no husbands. Some had to flee alone or only with their children. Many men have been killed. Even me, I am alone. My husband died of natural sickness before we came here. Since 1991 I have been managing by myself with the help of my mother.'

She pointed proudly to the roof of a nearby *tukul*. 'See, my mother built this roof! In Sudan this would never happen. The men do the building, the woman's duty is only to provide grass. But here, conditions are different. We cannot rely on men to do things. We must do them ourselves, join together and do them with our own hands. Women on their own have to work in the fields and do *leja-leja* for the Ugandans. And we are crying for other jobs to earn money.'

Alice's explanation of how things had changed for her since coming to Uganda were confirmed for me often in the following days. I met many other women doing 'men's work' – digging the fields, planting trees, building houses – in addition to what was traditionally considered 'women's work': preparing food and cooking, fetching water, washing, caring for children.

This was a major change in their lives since they had become refugees. And it was forcing men in Ikafe to revise their attitudes towards women, giving them more freedom as refugees than they'd had in Sudan. It also meant that men, more than women, had lost their traditional roles as breadwinners and providers, with all the psychological effects that this entailed.

We had been talking a lot about the different roles played by men and women in Sudan and in Ikafe. I asked Alice and Lona about attitudes towards boys and girls: 'People say that if you have a girl she will leave you to marry. But if you have a boy, he will stay and bring his wife to live with you. So they mostly prefer boys,' said Lona, matter-of-factly. Lona is a community midwife.

In Sudan it is the man who has to pay the dowry. And men are expected to have more than one wife, so marriage can be an expensive business. 'A big chief in Sudan is supposed to have four wives, while an ordinary man will have two,' Lona explained. 'And if he is a bit rich he can have three. Whether rich or not, he must pay a dowry for each wife.' In Ikafe the going rate for a wife is 30-40,000 Ugandan shillings (about $30 to $40). But in Sudan, according to Alice, it was much more – up to 60,000 Ugandan shillings ($60) or six head of cattle.

'Still, things have changed,' said Lona. 'For example, in the 1970s it was the parents who chose the husband for the girl. Now she is allowed to choose herself.'

Alice agreed: 'Yes, with me and Clement it was like that. It starts with the boy courting the girl. He will write her a letter and even if she likes him she will not reply automatically. She will keep his letter and the next and the next. Meanwhile she will talk to her trusted friend and ask her to find out about the boy – to make sure he understands his parents, that he would be a good person to get married to and that he is not going with other girls. The boy will be finding out more about the girl as well. The parents only find out when the girl has decided to write back to the boy and then the boy and the girl will ask the parents for permission to marry. He can then start to come and visit. What matters is that you love each other.'

'Yes,' said Lona, 'but also that you have children once you are married.'

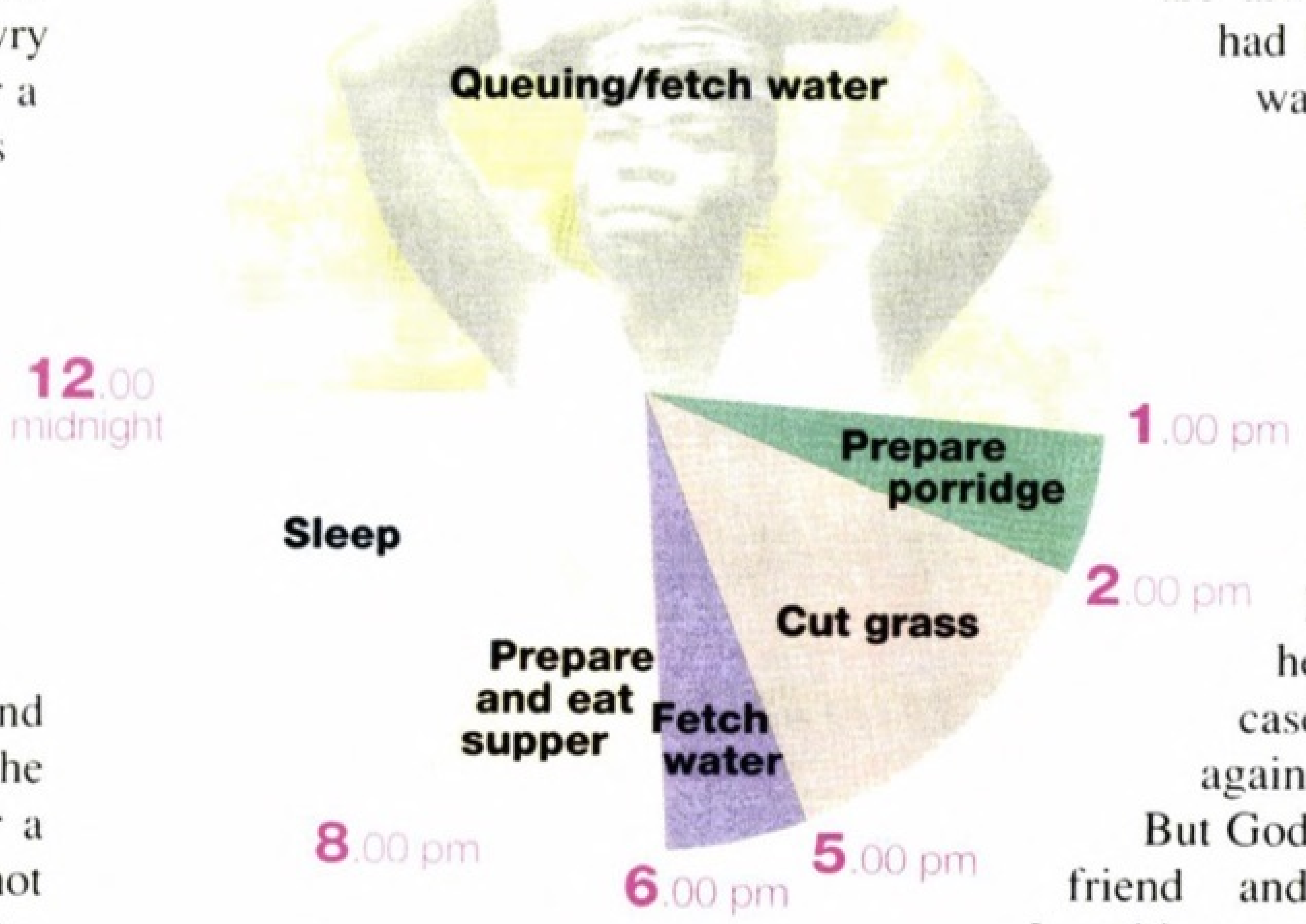
Alice nodded and suddenly launched into a flood of words: 'Life became very difficult for me when I did not have a baby at once. People insulted me and urged my husband to take another wife immediately.

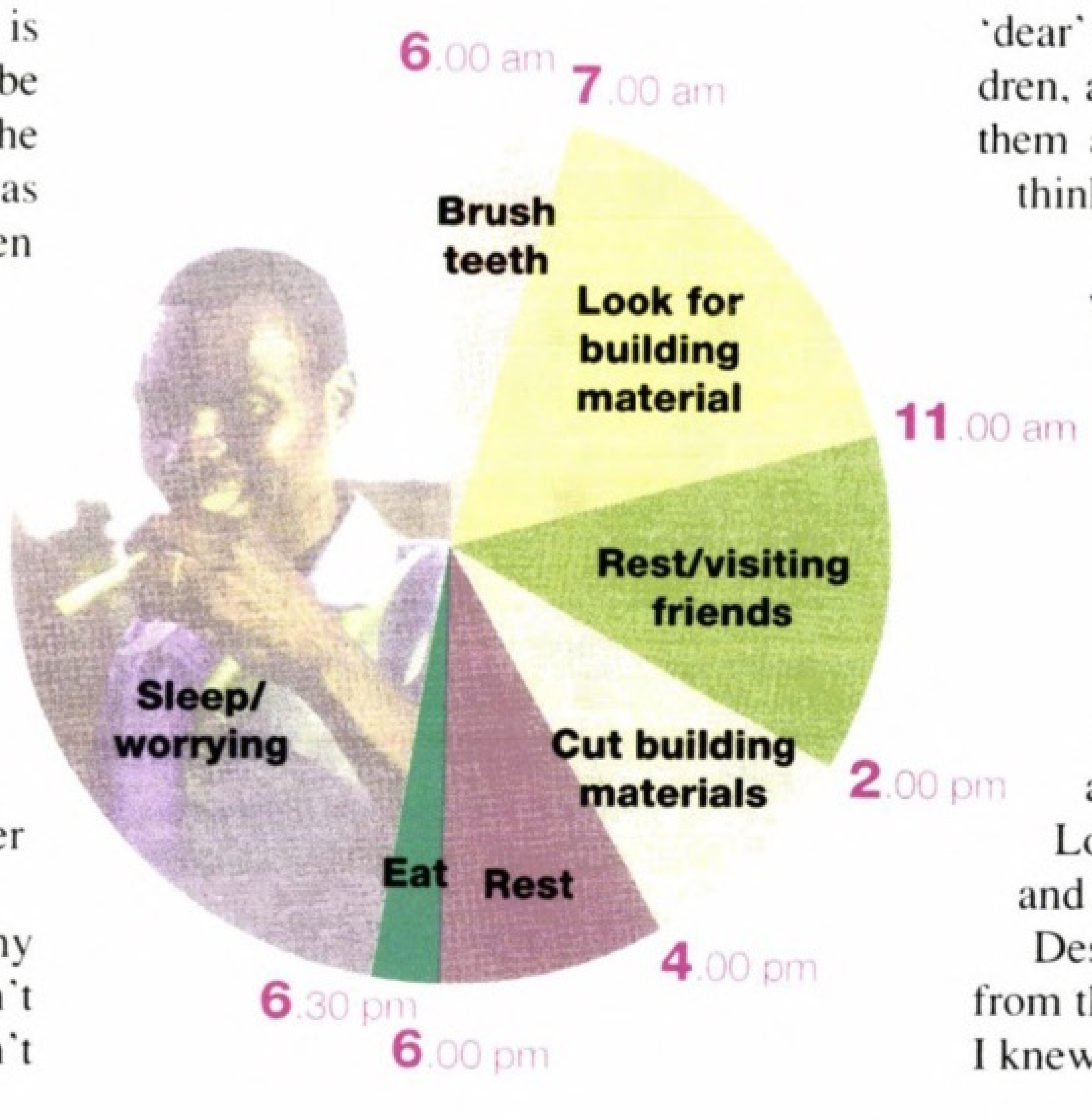
'After one year I made a promise to my husband and myself. I said: "I know I don't have problems with you and you don't have problems with me. But if after five years we still have no child then I will leave our home".

'So we waited one year, two years, three years, four years – and still no baby. Then, suddenly, the fifth year, Beatrice was born! We called her Beatrice Minallah Clement; '*Minallah*' meaning 'from God' because she was a gift from God. People were very surprised and Clement and I were very happy.

'Soon after I gave permission for my husband to take a co-wife. She and I got on well, we were like sisters...'

Polygamy is the rule rather than the exception both in Sudan and Uganda. Nearly all the men I met had more than one wife and nearly all the women had co-wives. The corollary of this was that attitudes to mothers living alone with their children were far more lenient than they are in the West. If you share a husband you are not going to be with him all the time and responsibility for your children rests with you. (On the other hand, if you divorce the father will get the children and give them to another wife or relative to look after.)


Daily routine for Kakwa, Pujulu and Kuku women, Ikafe 1995.


Daily routine for Kakwa, Pujulu and Kuku men, Ikafe 1995.

Women without children, rather than single mothers, bear the brunt of society's disapproval, as Alice explained:

'Two years later Clement died, leaving my co-wife also without children. My relatives started to blame me, saying "This girl made our Clement die without a child." They didn't consider Beatrice as a real child because she is a girl and girls they said are always useless. They told me I had killed my husband and that I was the one who should die.

'My in-laws said I should marry one of my husband's relatives as is our custom, but I had loved my late husband so much and I knew this would not be the same with anyone else. And so I decided to leave. I took Beatrice and eventually came here. I didn't want to marry in case the same thing happened again and I could not conceive. But God is great and I came to love a friend and unexpectedly my little Josephine was born.'

At this point Alice broke into uproarious and joyous giggles. 'Even my in-laws, who now also live in Ikafe, were happy that I had had another child. They called my baby 'dear' and said that I should have more children, a brother for my two girls. I looked at them and said: "In this situation? I don't think so." '

As I got up to say good-bye, there was much whispering between the two women. Lona dashed off and came back again with something tied in a cloth in her hands. 'Nikki,' said Alice, 'We are sorry that we cannot give you more food. If we were in our own country we would cook you a proper meal. But please accept these eggs as a gift from us, as an offering from Lona, to thank you for sitting with us and listening to us.'

Despite my worries about taking food from those who had so little, it was an offer I knew I could not refuse. ■

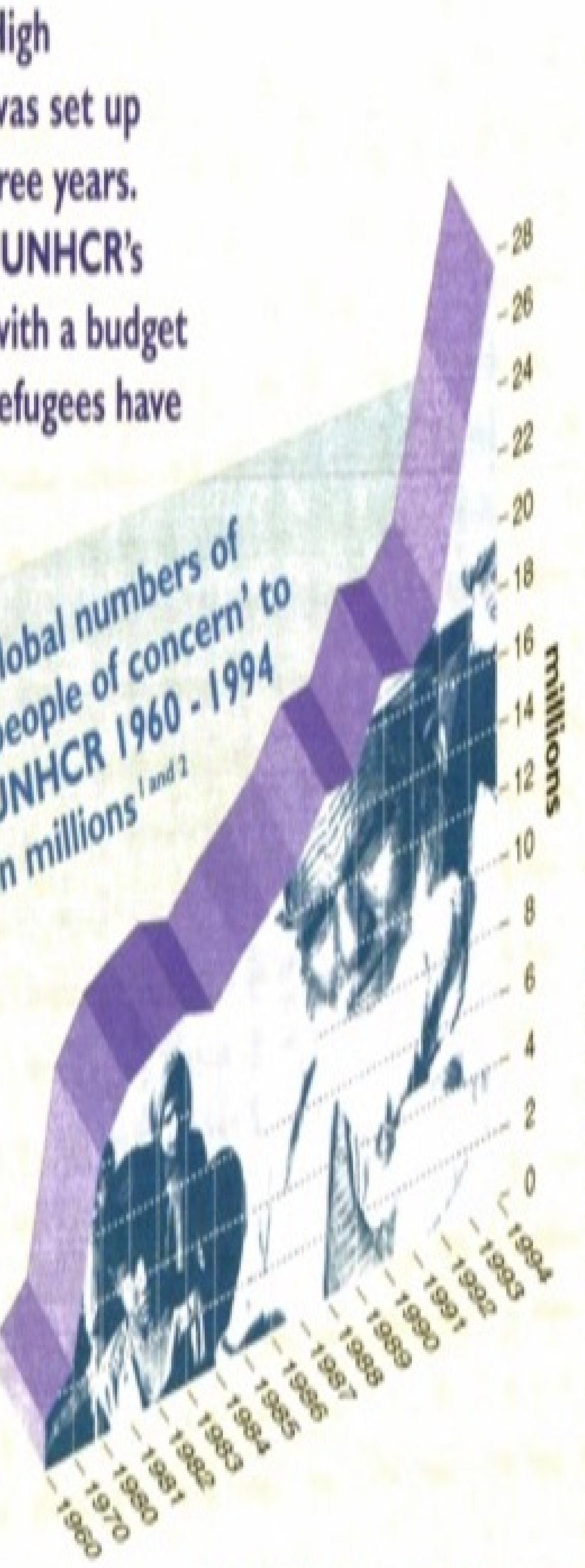
PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

When the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was set up in 1951, it had a projected lifespan of three years. After that it wouldn't be needed. Today, UNHCR's remit covers some 27.5 million people, with a budget of $1.28 billion. And 80% of the world's refugees have fled from one poor country to another.

DEFINITION

United Nations definition of a refugee

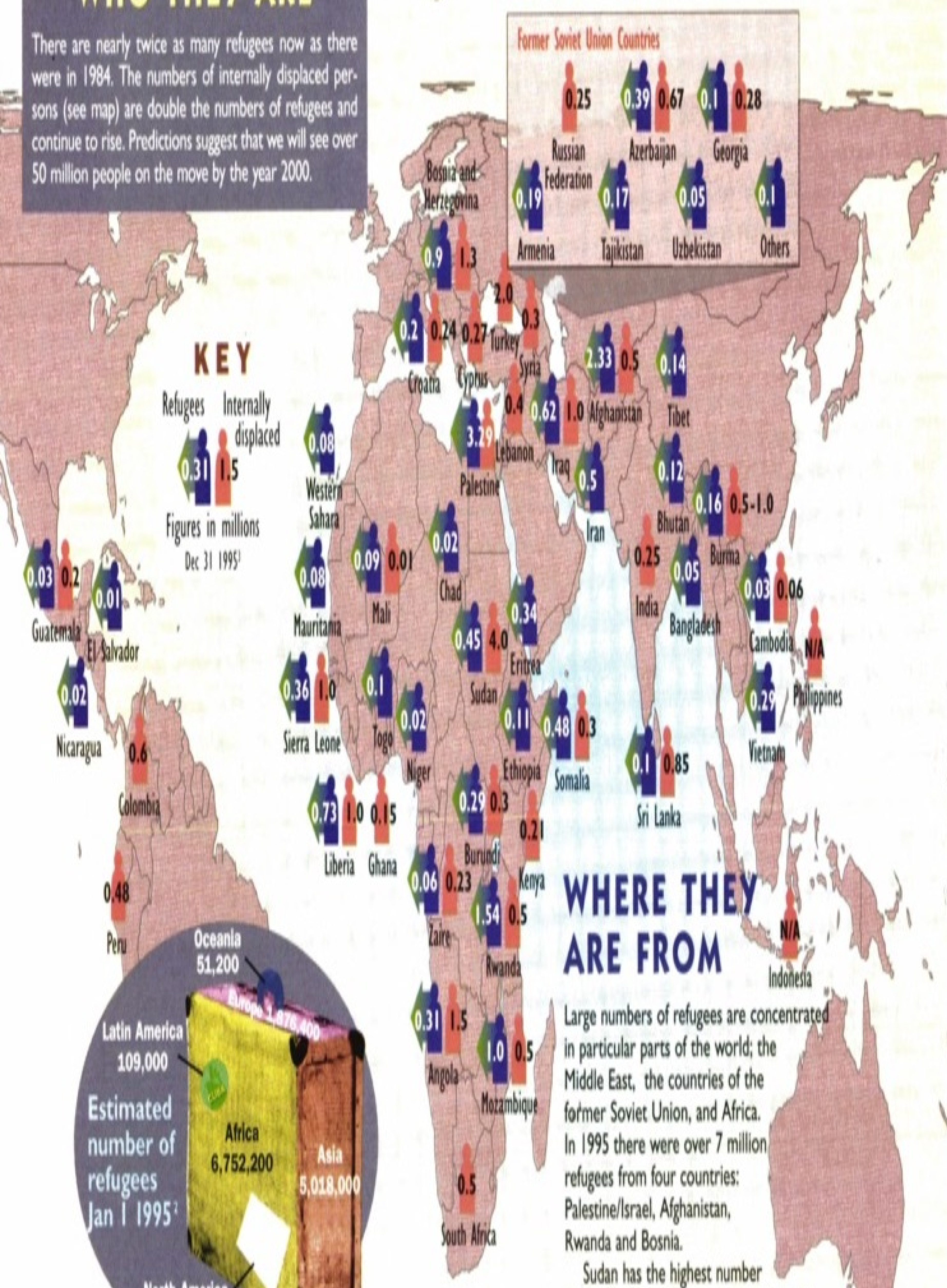
'Someone who has left his or her own country or is unable to return to it owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.'



GREGORY GUEST

WHO THEY ARE

There are nearly twice as many refugees now as there were in 1984. The numbers of internally displaced persons (see map) are double the numbers of refugees and continue to rise. Predictions suggest that we will see over 50 million people on the move by the year 2000.


KEY
Refugees
Internally displaced
0.31
1.5
Figures in millions
Dec 31 1995[1]
Former Soviet Union Countries
0.25
Russian Federation
0.39
0.67
Azerbaijan
0.1
0.28
Georgia
0.19
Armenia
0.17
Tajikistan
0.05
Uzbekistan
0.1
Others
Bosnia and Herzegovina
0.9
1.3
0.2
0.24
Croatia
0.27
Cyprus
2.0
Turkey
0.3
Syria
0.4
Lebanon
3.29
Palestine
0.62
1.0
Iraq
2.33
0.5
Afghanistan
0.14
Tibet
0.5
Iran
0.12
Bhutan
0.16
0.5-1.0
Burma
0.25
India
0.05
Bangladesh
0.03
0.06
Cambodia
N/A
Philippines
0.29
Vietnam
0.1
0.85
Sri Lanka
N/A
Indonesia
0.08
Western Sahara
0.08
Mauritania
0.09
0.01
Mali
0.02
Chad
0.45
4.0
Sudan
0.34
Eritrea
0.36
1.0
Sierra Leone
0.1
Togo
0.02
Niger
0.11
Ethiopia
0.48
0.3
Somalia
0.73
1.0
Liberia
0.15
Ghana
0.29
0.3
Burundi
0.21
Kenya
0.06
0.23
Zaire
1.54
0.5
Rwanda
0.31
1.5
Angola
1.0
0.5
Mozambique
0.5
South Africa
0.03
0.2
Guatemala
0.01
El Salvador
0.02
Nicaragua
0.6
Colombia
0.48
Peru
Estimated number of refugees Jan 1 1995[2]
Oceania 51,200
Europe 1,876,400
Latin America 109,000
Africa 6,752,200
Asia 5,018,000
North America 681,400

WHERE THEY ARE FROM

Large numbers of refugees are concentrated in particular parts of the world; the Middle East, the countries of the former Soviet Union, and Africa. In 1995 there were over 7 million refugees from four countries: Palestine/Israel, Afghanistan, Rwanda and Bosnia.

Sudan has the highest number of internally displaced persons, followed by Turkey. The internally displaced, unlike refugees, have no protection under international law.

WHY THEY LEAVE

Most refugees leave their homes not because they want to, but because they have to. There are of course some who leave for a better life, but these days they are unlikely to be counted as refugees and given leave to stay anywhere else.

There are five main reasons why people leave:

War – conflict both internal and external. When there is fighting, civilians suffer and can be made homeless, often having to leave everything behind them in their flight.

Environment – people are forced to flee from flood, fire or drought, sometimes natural and sometimes created by humans.

Politics – dictatorships and state repression threaten opposition groups, trade unions, certain nationalities and other bodies who do not agree with them.

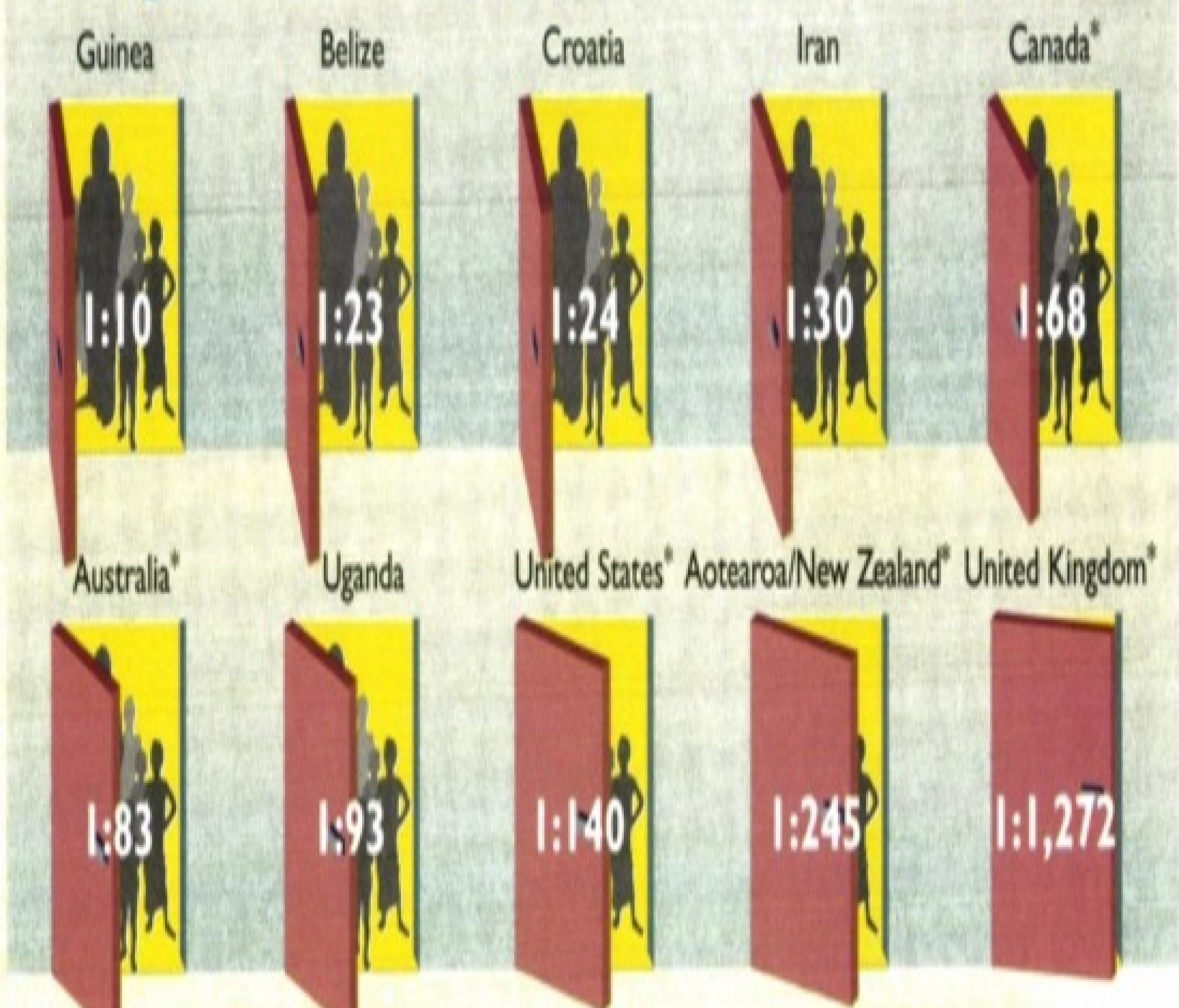
Persecution – individual repression puts people in danger because of their race, religion, gender, or sexuality.

Economics – people leave their countries because they are poor and hope for a better life elsewhere.

WHERE THEY GO

The numbers of those seeking asylum continue to increase. In 1983, some 100,000 people asked for asylum in Europe, North America, Australia and Japan. By 1992 this figure had risen to over 800,000. But it is becoming increasingly difficult to be recognized as a refugee, especially in Western Europe. In 1992, of the 272,000 individual applications considered, only 25,000 (9%) were granted refugee status, with 29,000 allowed to stay on humanitarian grounds.[1]

Refugees in relation to total population of asylum country (1995)[3]



* Refugees resettled and persons granted asylum 1975-1993

WHY THEY GO HOME

Most refugees want to go home. Some do, either because the situation has improved in their home country, or because their place of refuge has become more dangerous than the country from which they fled. Some are forced to leave by their host governments, despite a UN Convention which prohibits the forced repatriation of those who are acknowledged to be 'refugees'. Increasingly, even those who are said to go 'voluntarily' may be subject to pressure. Many live in a constant state of flux.

Voluntary and forced repatriation. Top 12 countries 1995[3]

FROM		TO
Iran, Pakistan	244,657	Afghanistan
Uganda, Zaire and others	240,000	Rwanda
Malawi, Zimbabwe and others	106,000	Mozambique
Iran	up to 103,000	Afghanistan
Mexico	83,000	Guatemala
Bangladesh	up to 61,250	Burma
Sudan	40,000	Eritrea
Kenya	40,000	Somalia
Burkina Faso, Algeria, others	35,000	Mali
Tanzania	22,000	Burundi
Zaire	17,000	Rwanda, Burundi
Croatia	15,000	Bosnia

KEY

voluntary: Iran, Pakistan; Uganda, Zaire and others; Malawi, Zimbabwe and others; Sudan; Kenya; Burkina Faso, Algeria, others; Croatia

forced: Iran; Mexico; Bangladesh; Tanzania; Zaire

MARGARET MURRAY / FORMAT

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1 State of the World's Refugees (UNHCR) 1993. 2 UNHCR by numbers 1995. 3 World Refugee Surveys 1995 and 1996.

Trading places

The local people welcomed the refugees to their area. But things haven't gone quite as some of them had hoped.

DAWN comes late in this part of the world and night falls suddenly. At 6.45am it was just light, the air still cool and the horizon slightly pink. Women were up, sweeping their compounds and winnowing grain.

I was staying at South Base camp, where the refugee village of Tilanga backs straight onto the Oxfam compound. Michael, the local community development worker, was brushing his teeth when Jenny and I arrived. As we walked around many other people were busily doing the same, using a twig. Michael told me that in Sudan people use a special tree for tooth-brushing but here in Uganda 'any small piece of wood has to do'.

Onions and fishes – small markets where locals and refugees buy and sell have sprung up all over Ikafe.

As we made our way to the edge of the village we came across a girl and a group of boys busily hoeing. They were all aged about 10 and told us that they were working the land before going to school. The girl, Rosina, was eager to tell us that this small plot was her very own, that she had planted and hoed it herself.

We walked on, along a track and through some trees. In the shade was another compound, with several goats in a makeshift shelter. 'These are nationals,' said Michael simply. A small boy in a ragged T-shirt waved at us as we passed.

More than 4,000 Ugandans from this area, Aringa County, live among the refugees in Ikafe. Their local council offered land for the refugee settlement in 1993, reasoning that the community would benefit from the water boreholes, new schools, roads, health clinics and other amenities built for the refugees. There would also be jobs.

Izarugu Ajaga who comes from the area and now lives with his family in South Base camp agrees: 'After the refugees leave, there will be new roads, schools, houses and clinics for us.' The Government of Uganda was also keen to welcome the refugees, for the same reasons. They would bring international funds into an area long underdeveloped. Infrastructure and local employment would follow. In addition, helping the refugees would underline the Ugandan Government's opposition to the Sudanese regime in Khartoum.

'But we also feel that these people are our brothers and sisters,' says Izarugu. The peoples from both countries have had to cross the border as refugees a number of times in recent decades. Many of the Sudanese in Ikafe today were also refugees in Uganda during the 'first phase' of the war in Sudan the 1960s. 'Ten years ago nearly all the Ugandans in this area had to escape to Sudan,' Izarugu recalls. 'We were the refugees then, and the Sudanese welcomed and helped us. Now the situation is reversed'.

Altruism and empathy mixed with self-interest and political expediency – it seemed an ideal recipe for a successful refugee settlement. And the refugees have made a difference to the area. They can sell things that the locals want – like the alcohol that the women make from cassava – for much-needed cash. But they also buy or barter from the Ugandans – many of the families have a few goats purchased locally and some even have small dogs that sit and pant in the shade of the compound. 'We are used to having pets like this at home,' they tell me.

Local people also sell the refugees fruit and vegetables to supplement what is otherwise a sparse, boring and stodgy diet.

'If it hadn't been for the mangoes that we were able to buy from the nationals we would have starved when the food didn't come and our crops wouldn't grow,' said Fatima quietly. Trade in the area has increased dramatically since the settlement was set up. There are local markets. Previously farmers had to travel all the way to Yumbe. More people are employed; more money is circulating in the economy.

The refugees have been a source of cheap labour, allowing local farmers to cultivate more land than before. And of course the Ugandans know that land leased to the refugees is land that will have been cleared for cultivation when they leave.

But the link between the peoples of northern Uganda and those of southern Sudan is not without its problems.

Ethnic groups like the Kakwa, the Acholi and the Bara straddle the border between the two countries. And the history of the area still has an impact on events and feelings today. Idi Amin was a Kakwa from Koboko, and Kakwa from Sudan joined his army and his administration. When he fell in 1979 they fled back to Sudan.

Meanwhile, the Kakwa in Uganda accused the Aringa of plotting to topple Amin's Government. Everyone in northern Uganda – regarded as 'Amin's area' – faced widespread destruction from Obote's army when it came in the 1980s to rout out Amin's supporters – and in the process killed people, looted churches and forced the majority of the population to flee. Many, like Izarugu, went to Sudan. At one point, I was told, only 200 people remained in Arua, the nearest large town to what is now Ikafe.

In Sudan, the Ugandans learned Arabic, stayed for a number of years and made friends. Izarugu met Clement while he was a refugee in Sudan. Then Clement was helping run the refugee camp and Izarugu was the refugee community development worker. In Ikafe the roles are reversed. Izarugu works in food distribution and Clement, the refugee, is the community development worker.

'It was on one of the first trips to distribute food that I saw him in Ikafe,' said Izarugu. 'I recognized him straight away. And now we are working closely together again, only this time he is the refugee.'

The relationship between a host community and a refugee population is nearly always complicated. Not just because of historical antagonisms but also because refugees attract foreign aid that may mean they have better living conditions than local people.

Vicky, the nursing officer at the hospital in Yoyo run by Action Africa, told me that at least half of her out-patients were local Ugandans, who in some cases were in worse shape than the refugees.

In Ikafe locals are given access to the things they had hoped for – clinics, dispensaries, schools, water and other facilities. Nonetheless the Aringa people feel hard done by. Their high expectations – probably too high – of employment and a general improvement in the community have not, in many of their eyes, been met. They complain that the refugees have been violating sacred bushes and using ceremonial water points. Some young people have reacted to this frustration with violence, assaulting base camps and threatening workers.

But Yassin, another Ugandan worker, was sure that things could be sorted out: 'The Aringa and the refugees must talk about these problems. The programme will not stop because of threats from the youth. But the right people must be consulted about the right things – where a building should be built or whose land is being used to site boreholes. There is a bright future; we just have to learn to build it together.'

I was not so sure. The arrival of the rebels might make for a dangerous alliance and I left, hoping that the discontent would not blow up into something more serious. ■

SUDAN

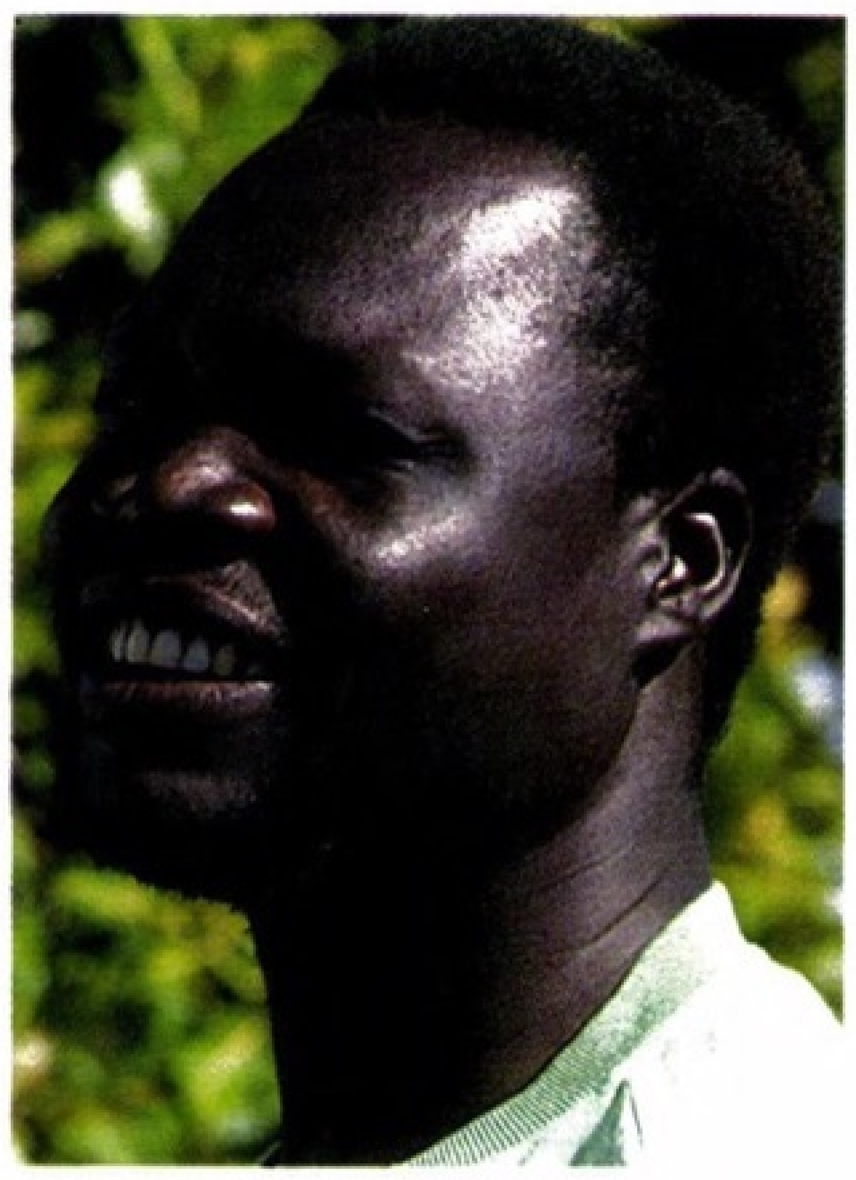
Size
Sudan is the largest country in Africa (2,505,810 sq km) – as big as the whole of Western Europe. South Sudan occupies a third of Sudan's landmass and has a population of about six million.
Population: 30,120,420
Languages: Arabic, especially in the North. The different ethnic groups speak over 100 languages.
Religion: Mainly Muslim in the North; Christian and traditional religions in the South.
GNP $420 per capita. Agriculture accounts for 35% of GDP.

UGANDA

Size
Uganda is about one-tenth of the size of Sudan (235,880 sq km).
Population: 19, 573, 262
Languages: English is the official language. There are many indigenous languages.
Religion: Roman Catholic 33%, Protestant 33%, Muslim 16% (mostly in the north) and 16% traditional religions.
GNP $170 per capita; Agriculture accounts for 57% of GDP. Growth rate: 8% (less in the north) which makes it one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa.

Stranger in a foreign land

Ikafe worker and Ugandan citizen Izarugu Ajaga talks about his own experience as a refugee in Sudan in the 1980s.



MY JOURNEY BEGAN in July 1982. My wife was then pregnant with our second child and our first-born was very small. We had to escape into the bush on the Uganda-Sudan border because of the fighting between Milton Obote, then President, and those who opposed him – including Museveni, our current President.

There was little food or water in the bush. We used water from a spring but that led to a lot of illness and death. We used to come back and collect food from our houses. It took two days to travel home. In addition, it was not safe because on your way back you would have to cross the Arua - Moyo road along which Government forces drove all the time. If they saw you they would shoot, because they believed that all civilians in the area were giving support to the rebels.

Eventually we realized that we would have to leave the bush and find shelter in a camp in Sudan. But we were afraid. The rebels wanted people to stay in Uganda and so they spread rumours about the camps – people were fenced in, they said; families and men and women were separated; they wrote on your back with hot wire the word 'refugee'. But I decided to take courage. I left my family and walked to the transit camp eight kilometres away over the border in Sudan.

Nothing terrible happened. We were welcomed, given a tent and then transferred to a settlement where we were given food and land very much like people have in Ikafe. After one month I managed to get permission to go and fetch my family.

It took a while to convince my wife that things were OK in Sudan and were not as the rebels had said. My mother and some of her relatives still wouldn't go.

We stayed for four months in the settlement. During the dry season I came back to the bush to try and collect the rest of my family – my mother, my elder brother and his family. But on my way I heard that my brother was dead. He had gone back to our town to collect food and belongings and had been killed by Government troops.

I continued my journey, found my mother and my brother's family and crossed with them to Sudan. I was now responsible for my own family and my brother's family.

Some of us younger refugees formed the Uganda Refugee Association. We campaigned for refugee students to go abroad or to get scholarships in Juba. Getting secondary education was a big problem – the Sudanese Government provided primary education but not secondary. So we initiated a self-help project for a secondary school in Yei with people assisting on a voluntary basis. The school remained there after we left and was used by the Sudanese.

By 1983 the war in Sudan had started again – but far away as yet, in Bor district. Then in 1985 the Obote regime fell in Uganda. The new President called for all soldiers fighting against Obote to come back. But civilians still thought it was too dangerous and it was not until two or three years later that people started returning to their homes, because they felt that it was better to die in their own country than to die in exile.

It was hard going back; some of us could not recognize the places that had been our homes. The trees were gone, the bush had taken over. My house had been burned to the ground. There was nothing left – even my certificates had been destroyed. On our arrival we were given a new label. We were no longer 'refugees' but 'returnees'. We had to build again from scratch. It was difficult.

Here we were, back in our own country, having to start all over again for a second time. ■

Bikes, bruises and boreholes

A bike ride weaves past water-points and grinding mills – and reveals some salutary lessons on stamina and patience.

My feet ache, my calves are covered in bruises and sweat is pouring down my forehead at such a rate that I no longer bother to wipe it off. I am on a big, heavy, black Chinese bicycle, pedalling furiously up and down dry riverbeds and along dusty tracks, trying to keep up with Theodor, my translator. I am relieved rather than annoyed when every few minutes we have to stop to greet a friend or a colleague or simply someone that he knows. It gives me a chance to catch my breath before we set off again.

The whole journey takes us about three hours. Theodor swears to me that he can do it in 45 minutes.

I soon learn the bicycle protocol. The moment you spot a vehicle in the distance – either by a loudly honking horn or by a cloud of dust moving towards you – you manoeuvre your bike into the ditch. How some people manage to do this with huge white sacks of maize, large bundles of cassava or a couple of trussed-up chickens balanced on their bicycle racks, I will never know.

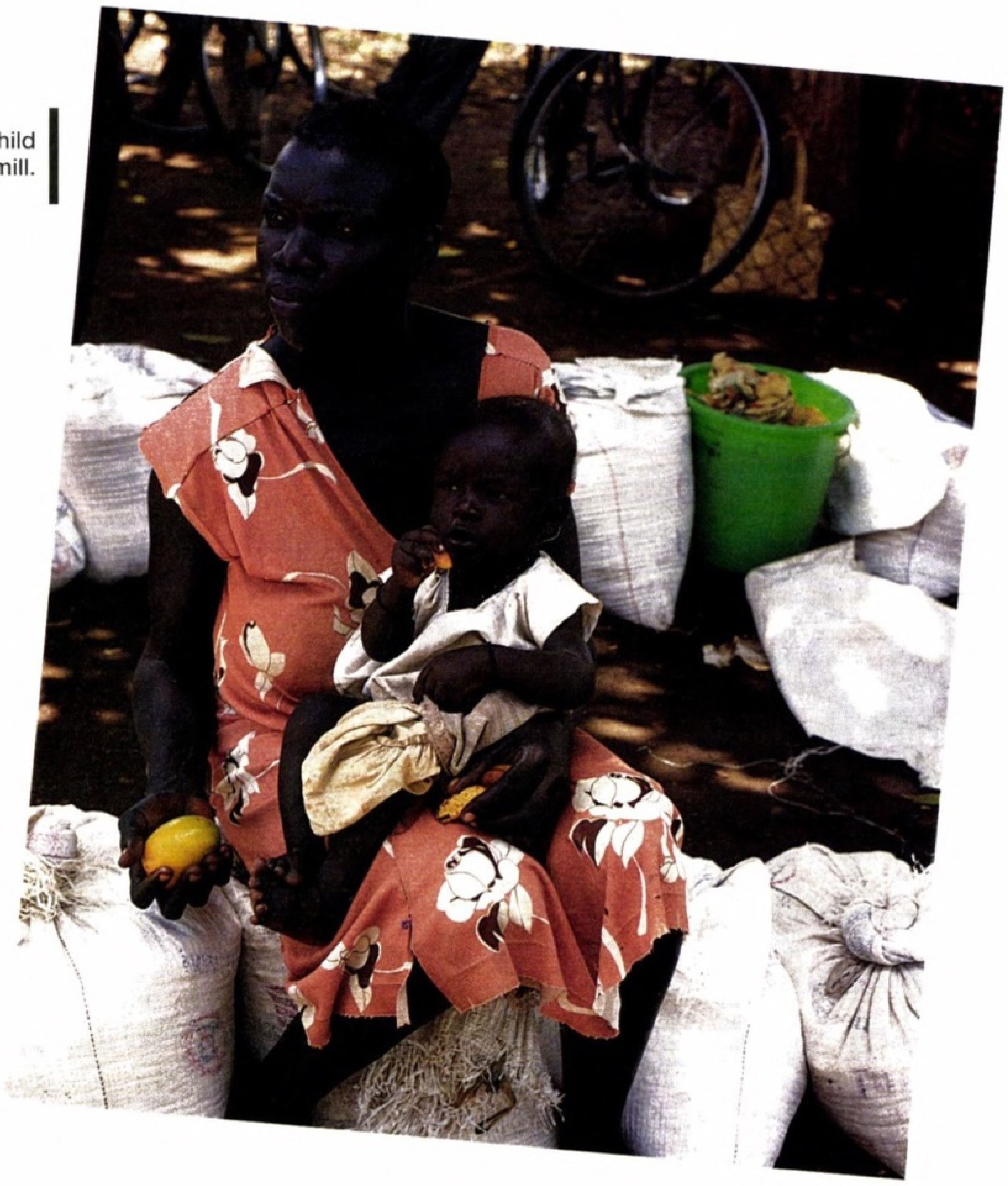
After falling once, I got off and scuttled to the side of the road whenever I saw anything remotely like a truck or pick-up approaching. I wasn't consoled for my bruises by the fact that when I travelled in a Landrover we forced several people off balance and into the ditch.

Travelling by bike and on foot enabled me not only to view the scenery, but to stop and chat to people and to observe them going about their daily business. Wherever I went people would call out in Arabic: '*Salaam aleikum*!' '*Aleikum salaam*,' I would reply. I had feared that to speak Arabic would be seen as 'political': refugees from Southern Sudan have had the language foisted on them by the Sudanese Government in Khartoum. But most people spoke Arabic along with their own local language and the better-educated spoke English as well.

The largest groups of people there to greet me were those clustered round the water-point. Whatever the time of day and wherever I was in Ikafe, there was always a long patient line of plastic jerrycans, blue, green and yellow, and a crowd of women and children waiting their turn. Someone would be pumping the handle up and down vigorously to propel the jet of water into their container while the rest waited their turn.

A good pump will yield 20 litres of water

Heading off: having just filled their jerrycans, these women will walk several kilometres to get home.



Mangoes and maize: mother and child wait their turn at the grinding mill.

– enough to fill a jerrycan – in three minutes. But a few bad ones – where the water table is low – can take an hour's worth of pumping. One 20-litre jerrycan provides enough water for one person for one day – including drinking, cooking and washing. Children often bring their own little containers, trying to lighten some of their family's burden. All along the road leading up to a borehole there are groups of women balancing full jerrycans on their heads and swaying gracefully on their way home.

At one point I get off the bike to try my hand at pumping. I am amazed how heavy the wooden handle is to manoeuvre and how hard I have to push to get a trickle of water to come out the other end. I give up after a few goes – much to the amusement of the assembled crowd – and a young woman takes over. She is carrying a baby in the traditional way, strapped to her back with a piece of cloth, its feet sticking out on either side of her body and its head resting on her back. She jumps up and down and water spouts out immediately. The other women laugh. The baby, amazingly, is rocked to sleep by the motion.

When people first came to the camp 18 months ago, water was a big problem. Pressure from UNHCR meant that they arrived in a hurry, before adequate water provision was made. There were not enough waterpoints and those there were often yielded only a trickle at a time.

Women had to wait, for days rather than hours, and sometimes overnight as well, to fill their jerrycans (see piecharts on page 17). This had an impact not only on the women's time but on their relationships with their husbands.

'At first,' said Dominica, an elected member of the Council which represents the refugees, 'men used to beat their wives if they took too long getting the water. They said: "why are you so slow, when other women have brought the water already?"'

Things have improved since then, but women say that they still often rise to get water at five in the morning, not returning home until the evening. Fatima Amelie, with one small daughter and another on the way, told me: 'If you want to get water here you go in the night. If you go in the morning you come back very late. And you have to do this every day.'

Most of the boreholes – drilled by the aid agency, CARE – are 70-80 metres deep, but some have to go far deeper to reach the water-table. 'The one in Okuyu is 130 metres – longer than a football pitch,' I was told. These are dug by a special drilling machine. There are also 'shallow wells' which are dug by hand. On average, the boreholes are used by several hundred people a day, mainly refugees, but also Ugandans. It is easy to see why the water table goes down so rapidly.

When the food rations arrive, women have to walk and then to wait again. This time to have the maize ground into flour so that they can make *posho*.

I go with my friend Alice Abau Elia to the grinding mill nearest to her home. She is lucky; it is only a couple of kilometres away. Because I am there, we hitch a lift on a Landrover.

At the grinding mill, a line of women sit in the dirt behind the bags of maize. Each bag now has a name roughly scribbled on it. The men inside the mill – a small building with a curious contraption of tubes and pipes and chutes in the middle of it – are completely covered in white dust.

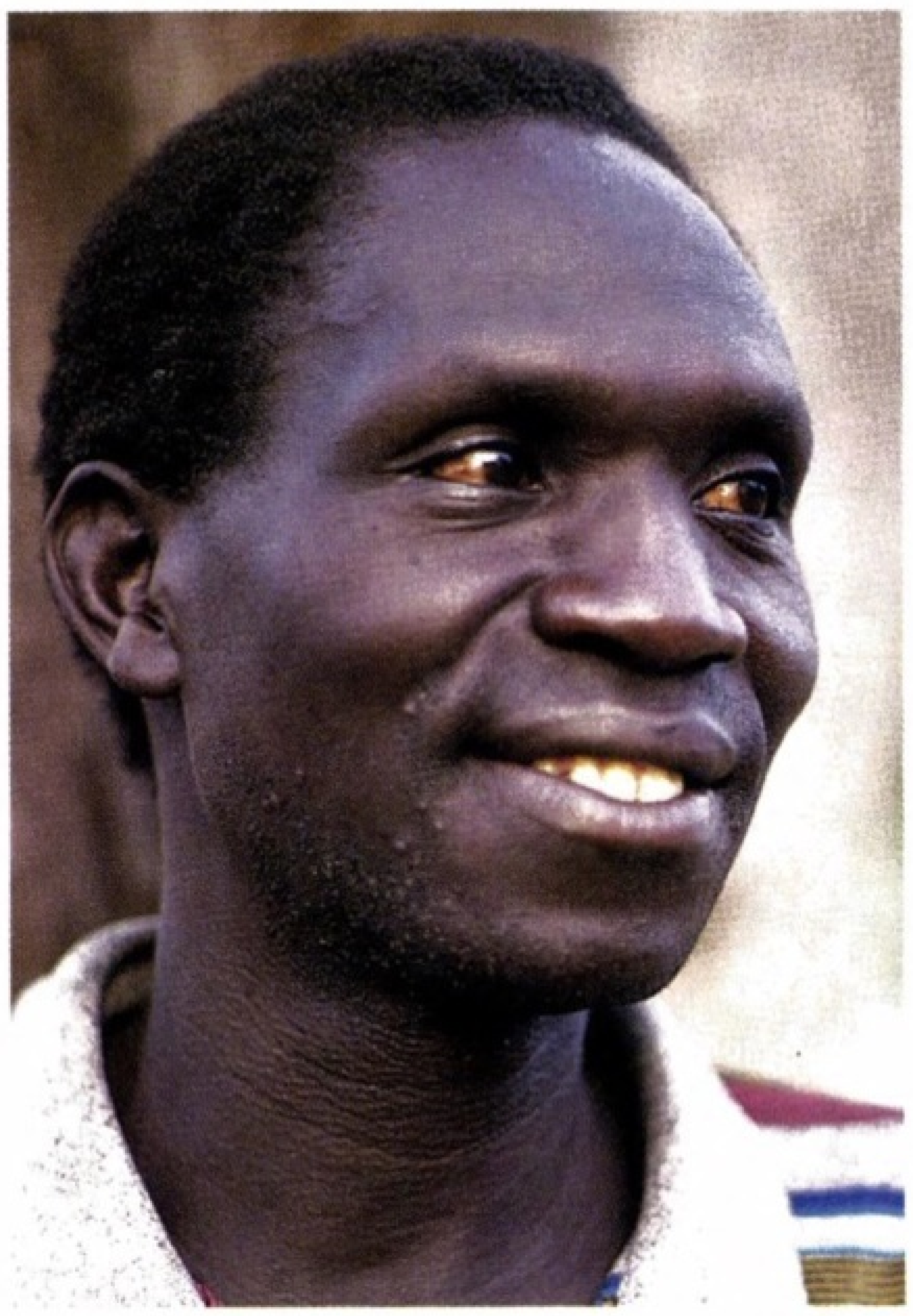
The windows are filled with thorn-covered twigs – to stop people coming in the sides and jumping the queue. 'Often,' says Alice, 'these women will have to wait for three or four days and nights, just sitting here. It is a big problem. They have to leave their other duties – the children, the cooking, fetching water, the house – just to wait here. Sometimes the food they bring runs out and they have to exchange their precious maize for a few mangoes. Either that or they would go hungry.'

The mills are each managed by a Grinding Mill Committee, made up of nationals and refugees. There is a shortage of grinding mills at present. More have been requested from UNHCR and WFP, but they have still to arrive. Grinding itself is currently free for both refugees and nationals, and on a first-come-first-served basis.

I look at the faces of the women waiting in line. They are hot and tired. Some have sleeping babies strapped on their backs. They stare back at me, curiously. Then Alice explains who I am and they break into excited chatter as each explains her predicament.

'This woman,' says Alice, 'has come from Northern Extension.' That is almost at the other end of the camp and I exclaim my surprise. Alice explains patiently. ' There are only two good grinding mills in Ikafe and this is one of them. People walk a long way to go to the grinding mill.'

As I stare at the women waiting in the sun and later at those carrying their big bags of ground maize slowly home, my own feat in cycling to Yoyo begins to pale into insignificance. ■



Democracy in Waiting

If refugees are treated as helpless that is what they will become. But giving control of their lives back to those who have lost everything is not easy. In Ikafe, an electoral system controlled by the refugees themselves is attempting to do just that.

'In most camps refugees essentially receive welfare without any involvement,' says Tony Burdon, Oxfam's representative in Uganda. 'The UN, governments and non-governmental organisations work together *for* the refugees, but generally not *with* them. We wanted to change this.'

The Ugandan Government, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Oxfam are trying to ensure this doesn't happen in Ikafe. Dependent refugees cost more than those who are even partially self-sufficient and confident. But more importantly, says Jamie Balfour-Paul, Ikafe's deputy Programme Manager: 'We want to treat refugees as people'.

I was interested to find out what decision-making structures had been set up in Ikafe to do this. And to see what difference it had made to the refugees themselves.

In Ikafe there are elected bodies at each level from Block to village to Point to Zone and a Refugee Council that is supposed to represent the whole settlement. These structures parallel existing ones in Uganda. The idea is that this should support consultation and co-operation with local Ugandans – although as yet this has not happened.

Alice Abau Elia, who told me so much about women's lives in Ikafe, is one of two women (and 11 men) on the Refugee Council. She explains to me how the elections were held, her face breaking into a smile as she remembers:

'All the candidates stand in a line; whoever wants to vote for you stands behind you. I had a long line behind me, of both women and men. I was elected by everybody – it was very democratic. There is no restriction on age but often those who get elected are those who know how to read and write.'

Crescencio, acting Chair of the Council, is more critical. 'The Refugee Council has only met once so far,' he charges. An agro-forester in charge of tree-planting in south Ikafe, Crescencio is a stocky man with fast, emphatic speech. 'It is not answerable to Oxfam – it is answerable to the refugees themselves. So it should not be a passive body. It should be active. It should explore ways to improve life for the refugees. This means having external support, links with other organisations and the Government.'

According to Crescencio it's critically important that more women become involved in governing the camp. 'The voice of our women is still not heard,' he says. 'We have only one women's representative at each of the different levels in Ikafe, except for the Council itself, where there are two.'

When I ask Dominica, the other woman on the Refugee Council, about this, she laughs, then becomes serious: 'Women need to be given the skills so that they can stand for elections. Most of the women in Ikafe are from the rural areas and are not educated. I was lucky. I had a father who believed in education for girls and I went to a missionary school. But even back in Sudan women are not recognized.'

When I put this to Crescencio he says firmly: 'Dominica is wrong. In Southern Sudan we have women who are lawyers, teachers, ministers. In the North, women are disadvantaged. But not in the South. In the South the war has made schooling difficult for both men *and* women. Anyway, here in Ikafe you do not have to be educated to be elected – though I admit that most are. It is not your sex but your ideas that are important.'

Dominica, however, is quite clear that women's position is not equal to men's, whether in Sudan or in Ikafe. But she acknowledges that things are changing:

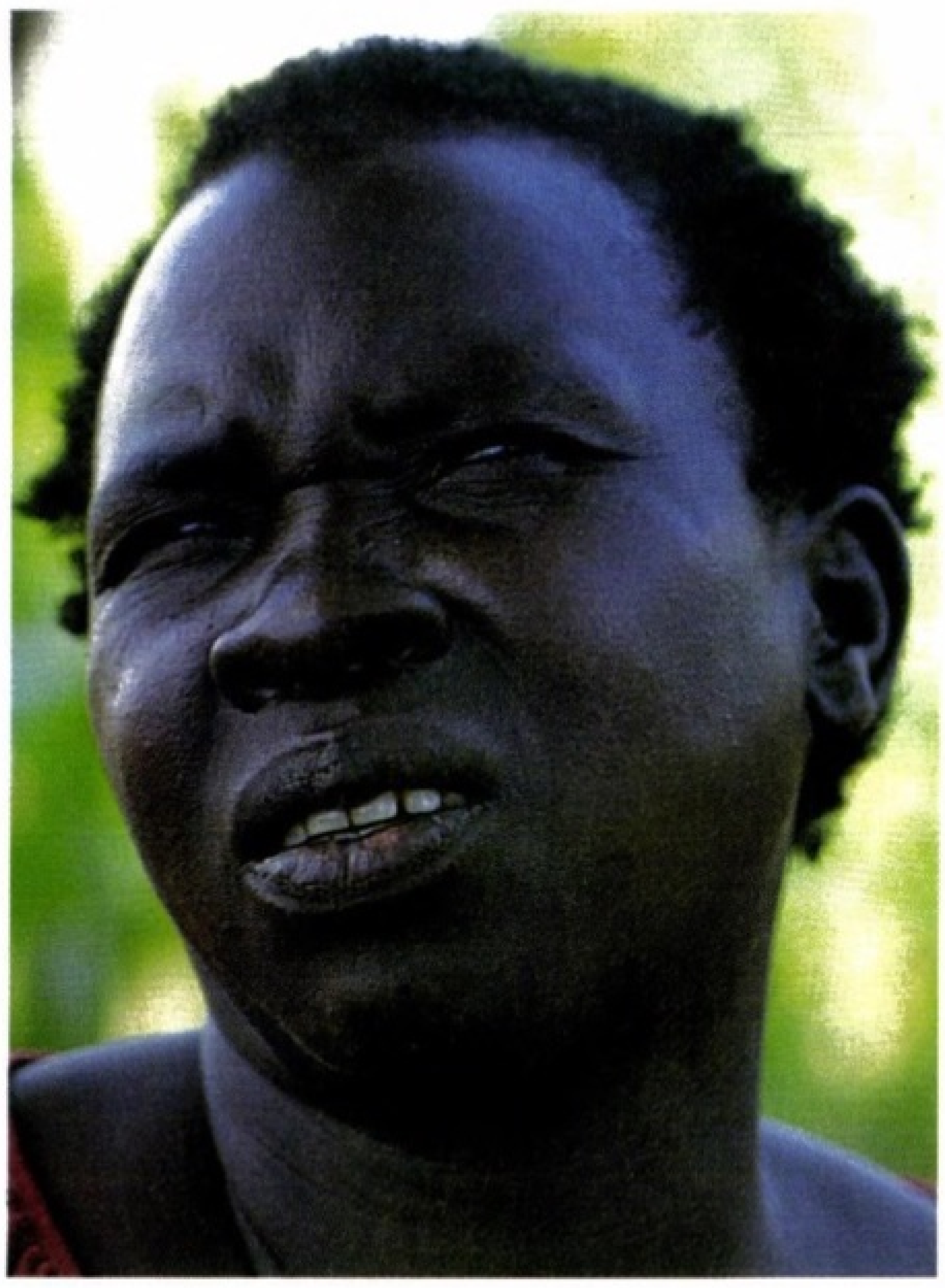
In search of a church

Christianity is very important to the Southern Sudanese, and a lifeline for the refugees who have so little else to hold onto...

People told me that they heard drumming in at Point M on Sunday mornings, so one Sunday Jenny Matthews and I set out in search of a church. We soon find a young boy who says he is going to the service and would be happy to take us along.

On the way he gives us a tour of all the churches in the area. 'Over there,' he gestures towards the school, 'is the Catholic church. And here' – we have walked down a dry riverbed where the sound of frogs completely drowns out anything he is saying – 'are the Pentecostalists.' We shake hands with the three Pentecostalists who are sitting and waiting for the rest to arrive. 'And over there are the Seventh-Day Adventists. The Dinka are mostly Anglicans but they have their own service in their own language.'

We arrive at the Anglican church, a few sticks and a straw roof in the shade of a tree. Someone hurries over with some stools and a few moments later Emmanuel, Good counsel – Crescencio (left) and Dominica (below) are both elected onto the Refugee Council.



'The pulling up of women is now agreed. People are understanding that knowledge is fruitful; that it is good for a woman to be given skills; that if she has skills and the means to live she will be OK wherever she is.'

Slowly, more women are becoming decision-makers in Ikafe. Last year there were no women on the Refugee Council – now there are two. 'Who knows,' Dominica shrugs. 'Next year there may be three. These things take time.'

Many people point out to me that the democratic structure imposed by Oxfam sits uneasily alongside the inherited positions that existed in Sudan. Crescencio feels strongly about this: 'The old structures are *wrong*,' he says forcefully.

I must look somewhat surprised at the vehemence of his statement. So he repeats it: 'The old system was wrong. If I die, I give my position as headman or whatever to my son. But what if my son is a thief? Or maybe he doesn't have the capacity? It is outdated. We don't want it. Back in Sudan we were already suggesting that the chiefs should be elected.'

Crescencio speaks in bursts of rapid staccato, so fast I can barely understand him. But then he slows down: 'Of course what I am saying here is a not a thing which will change overnight. This is a trend but it has to start somewhere.'

Alice agrees that the new system is a good one: 'In Sudan I would not have been on the Refugee Council because I am a woman. There are no elections like this. I feel that this system is clear and it is fair.'

At this point Theodor, my translator, who has accompanied me to meet Alice, chips in:

'In Sudan the chiefs are powerful. Even here, they are listened to more than the Chair or an elected representative. Also the church is very influential. People are familiar with the gospel and they try to follow the church leaders. This electoral system is new to most people; it has been introduced to them only here in exile.'

But 'here in exile' there is a potential for change that may not have existed back in war-torn Sudan. Dominica, Alice, Crescencio, Theodor and many other refugees are full of ideas and excitement about the new system. Whether it can deliver their dreams is another question. ■

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the lay reader, arrives, apologizing for a) not being here to greet us and b) for the priest who has gone to Bidibidi Base Camp to take a service and is therefore not here to greet us.

It takes a while to establish that the service at Point M is not about to begin in a hurry. After sitting around for some time we suggest a tour of the area. We first go by the local water point where nationals and refugees are queuing together, then to the village where the deputy head of the local school, Taban Salah, a tall man with one black tooth, is doubling as a bicycle repairman.

Emmanuel, official and demure in his long black robe, tells us, as we joke with Taban and his wife, Mary, that the group around us are the 'revivalists', the new members of the church. As if to prove his point a man and a woman suddenly emerge from behind a grass hut and begin to play musical instruments. The man, Emmanuel Boi, blows a *gonga*, a long trumpet-shaped tube made from old tin containers. And the woman, Jesolina Jube, plays the *koyo*, made of a gourd with seeds inside. The noise is loud and vibrant and cheerful, enough to revive anyone.

Back at the church, people are now arriving and we take our seats. The service is in Kakwa but Simon, another teacher from the school, kindly translates for us and someone else lends us an English Bible. There is much singing and drumming on some battered-looking drums, then a sermon.

The whole service takes a long time, though otherwise is similar to Anglican services anywhere in the world. There are readings from the Bible as well as prayers, including one that I immediately recognize from its cadences as the 'Our Father'. Then there is a collection, where people bring small offerings, mainly of maize rather than money. And finally a long list of announcements – names of those who are going to build the roof of the new church (men) and those who are going to make tea for them (women); names of those whose houses will be open for prayers during the week; admonitions to share what you have with your neighbour. And, finally, a closing prayer:

'Though we live in hunger, God will help us if we pray. He will take us back to our own country. Jesus talked of the days of joy and the days of suffering. We are now in the days of suffering. Let us pray that soon we will have our days of joy.'

When we have said our farewells and thanked everyone for a final time we look back. The congregation have formed a circle outside the church and are still dancing and singing behind us. ■

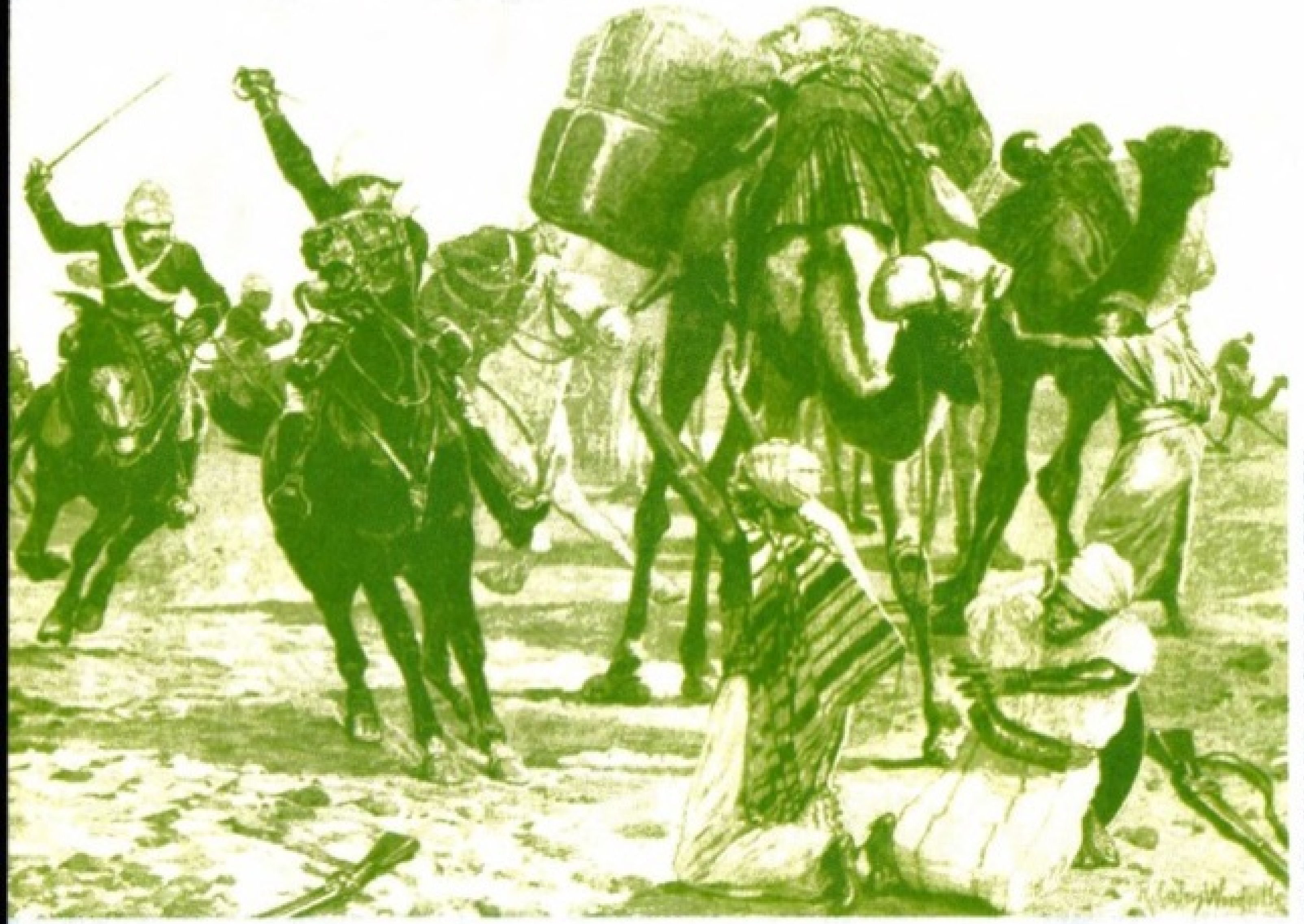
A sign of peace – shaking hands to say farewell at the end of the church service.

A History of Sudan

The conflict in Sudan is often portrayed as being between the prosperous Arab North and the impoverished and neglected Christian South. But this is too simplistic. Sudan is a country of great variety; many different ethnic groups exist side by side and alliances are formed for many different reasons.

But there is a difference between North and South which was exacerbated under British colonial rule. If the civil war is ever to end it will need a concerted effort on the part of the international community and the surrounding countries.

1821 Turco-Egyptian army conquers central and northern Sudan.
1885 the seige of Khartoum ends with the death of General Gordon, leading the Egyptian forces against the Mahdi, a religious leader. Mahdist state established.
1892 the Belgians capture Western Equatoria – including parts of northern Uganda.
1898 Anglo-Egyptian forces under General Kitchener defeat the Mahdist forces at Omdurman and establish an Anglo-Egyptian 'condominium' to run the country. The British recognize North and South as separate entities but fail to develop local Southern economic and administrative structures.



MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

Sudanese supplies are captured by the British – from the Illustrated London News, 1885.

Between **1930** and **1940** nationalist politics develop rapidly in the North. Southern Sudan is less keen on independence, as people are unprepared and unconsulted. In **1955** the first civil war begins.
In **1956** Sudan becomes independent. General Abboud takes over in **1958** and begins a programme of Islamization. In **1963** the Anyanya movement for Southern secession is formed.
1965 There is a civilian government. **1969** Colonel Jafar Mohammed Nimeiri takes power in a military coup,

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Sudan WHO'S WHO

Lt-General Umar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir (right) took power in Sudan in a military coup in June 1989, and has run a military dictatorship with a programme of Islamization ever since.

The Sudan People's Liberation

SUDAN

Cross

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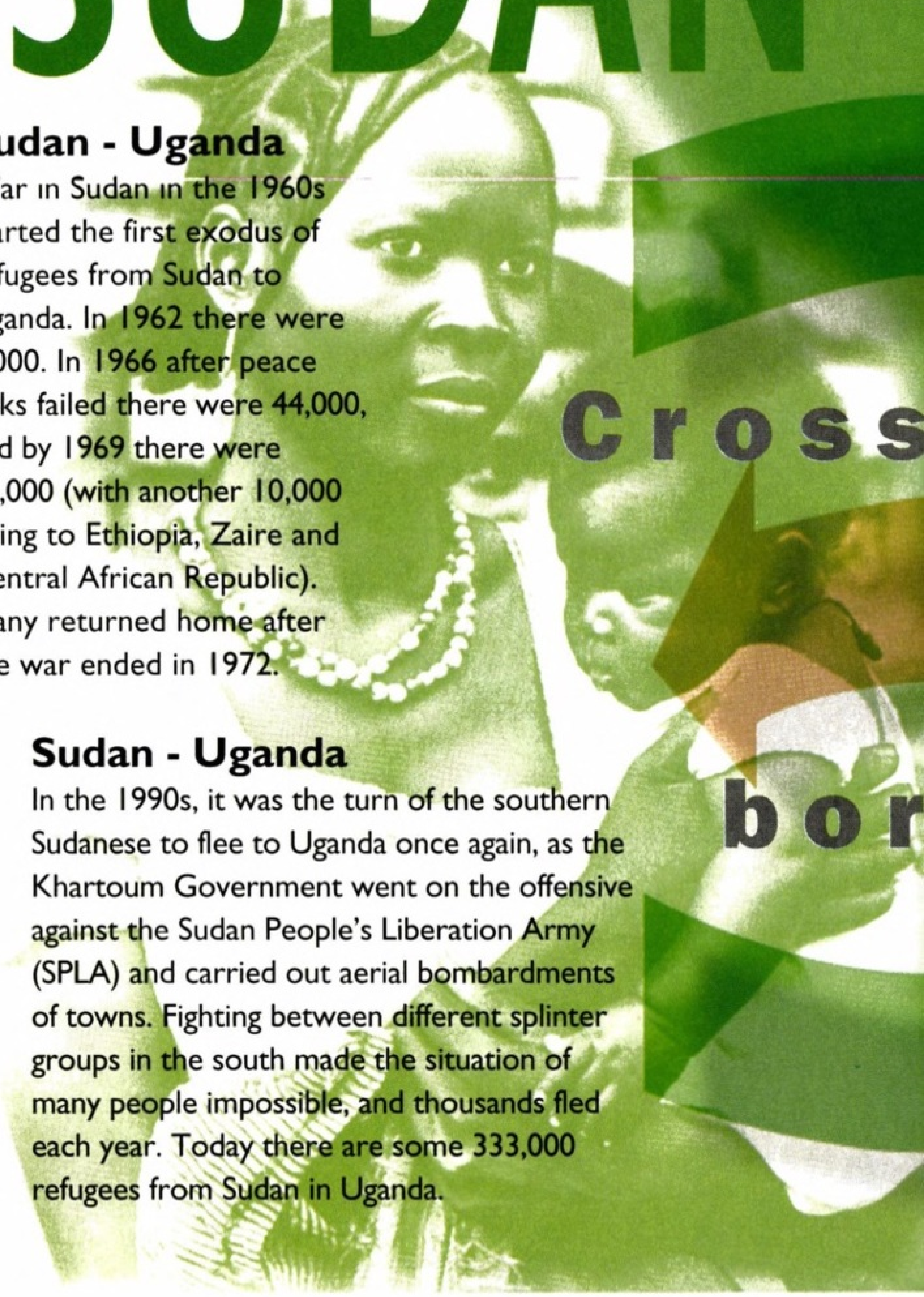


PETER SOLBJERGHOJ

Sudan - Uganda

War in Sudan in the 1960s started the first exodus of refugees from Sudan to Uganda. In 1962 there were 4,000. In 1966 after peace talks failed there were 44,000, and by 1969 there were 74,000 (with another 10,000 going to Ethiopia, Zaire and Central African Republic). Many returned home after the war ended in 1972.

Sudan - Uganda

In the 1990s, it was the turn of the southern Sudanese to flee to Uganda once again, as the Khartoum Government went on the offensive against the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and carried out aerial bombardments of towns. Fighting between different splinter groups in the south made the situation of many people impossible, and thousands fled each year. Today there are some 333,000 refugees from Sudan in Uganda.

Uganda WHO'S WHO

Idi Amin became President of Uganda in 1971 in a coup which overthrew the Government of Milton Obote. He is often known as 'the butcher of Kampala' as he headed a reign of terror in which Ugandan Asians were expelled from the country and many people murdered. He was deposed in 1979.

Milton Obote first became Prime Minister in 1962, the year that Uganda became independent. He returned from exile in Tanzania in 1980. Under his Presidency the Ugandans suffered more atrocities. He was deposed in a coup in 1985.

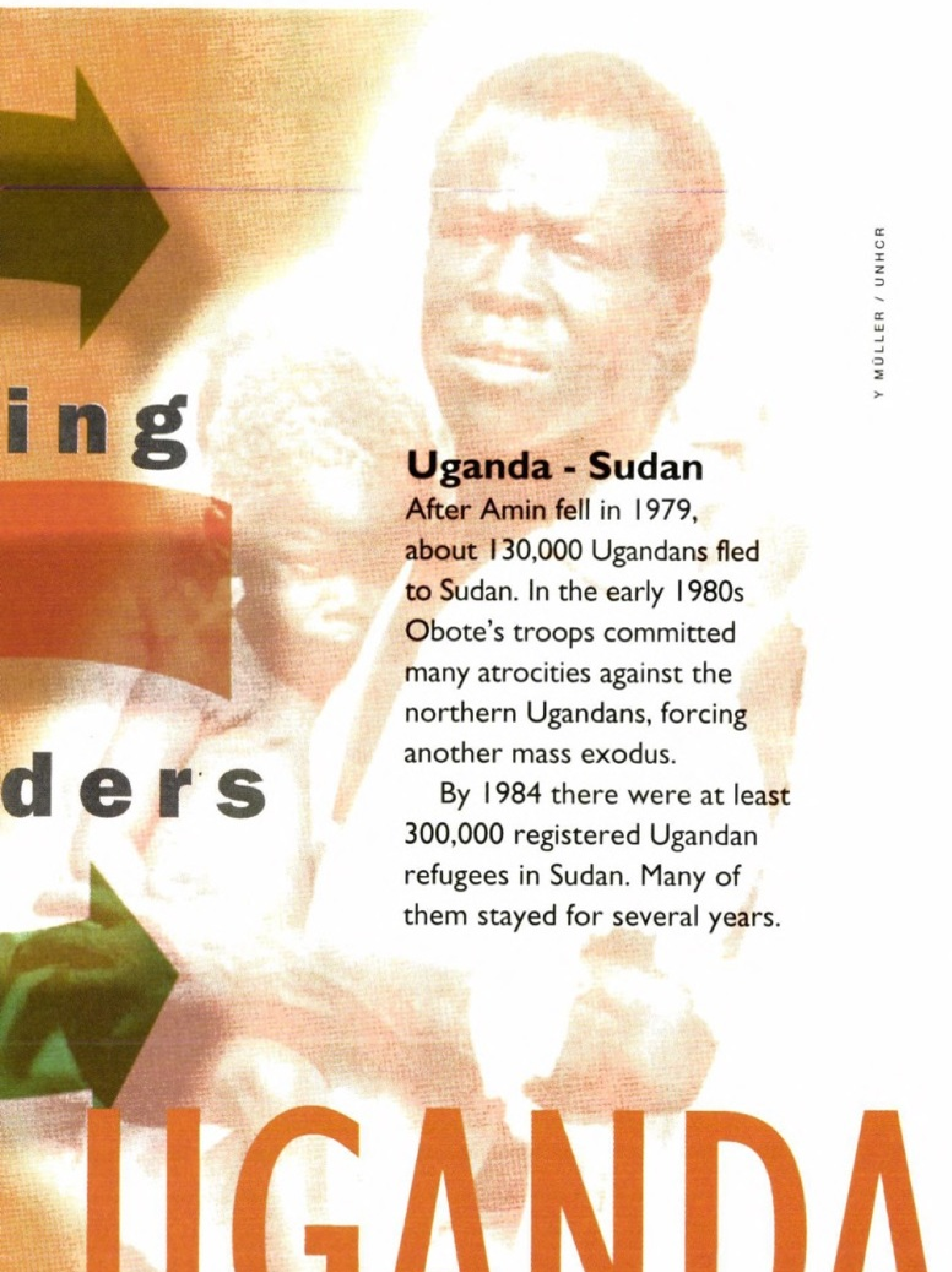
Yoweri Museveni (right) is President of Uganda, re-elected in May 1996. Museveni has been in power for 10 years and is widely credited with improvements in

Movement/ Army (SPLM/A) was formed in 1983 under the leadership of **Dr. John Garang**, a Dinka, who had support from the Mengistu regime in Ethiopia until it fell in 1991. The SPLA controls large areas of the South and is fighting a running battle with Bashir's Government.

In August 1991 the SPLA split into **SPLA Mainstream** (led by Garang) and **SPLA United** (later renamed the Southern Sudan Independence Movement) led by **Dr Riek Machar**. Fighting between the two has led to many civilian deaths, and more splinter groups have broken off since then. Machar signed an agreement with the Government in June 1996, with a charter agreeing a referendum.

While the struggle has mainly been between North and South Sudan, another is taking place between the Northern Government and the **Nuba people** in the mountains in the centre of the country.

FRANK SPOONER / GAMMA



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Y MÜLLER / UNHCR

Uganda - Sudan

After Amin fell in 1979, about 130,000 Ugandans fled to Sudan. In the early 1980s Obote's troops committed many atrocities against the northern Ugandans, forcing another mass exodus.

By 1984 there were at least 300,000 registered Ugandan refugees in Sudan. Many of them stayed for several years.

UGANDA

Uganda's economic, political and social life. Museveni led the National Resistance Movement and Army which opposed both the Amin and the Obote regimes.

Colonel Juma Oris, formerly in Amin's Government, heads the **West Bank Nile Front**, an anti-Museveni rebel group which operates in northern Uganda. **Joseph Kony** heads the **Lord's Resistance Army**, a group set up in 1985 under the guidance of Alice Lakwena, who claimed to be receiving her orders from the spirit of an Italian who died during the First World War. The LRA now occupy an area of land between Kampala and northern Uganda. Museveni has vowed that he will not negotiate with them as they stand accused of many atrocities.

CAMERA PRESS

A History of Sudan

promising socialism, but he soon finds himself changing his aims to accomodate the powerful Islamic lobby.

The Addis Ababa agreement in **1972** ends the war in Sudan, promising development and autonomy in the South. There is peace for 10 years, though debt spirals and prices rise.

In **1983** Nimeiri introduces Islamic *sharia* law which is fiercely opposed by the South. Civil war resumes. The Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/SPLM) is formed with Colonel Dr John Garang at its head.

In **1984/5** there is famine in western and eastern parts of the country and widespread strikes and demonstrations. A popular uprising overthrows Nimeiri and General Suwar al Dahab is asked to take power.

In **1986** Elections result in a Government under Sadiq al-Mahdi. In **1987** al-Mahdi declares a state of emergency. In **1988** there is famine in the South and 250,000 people die.

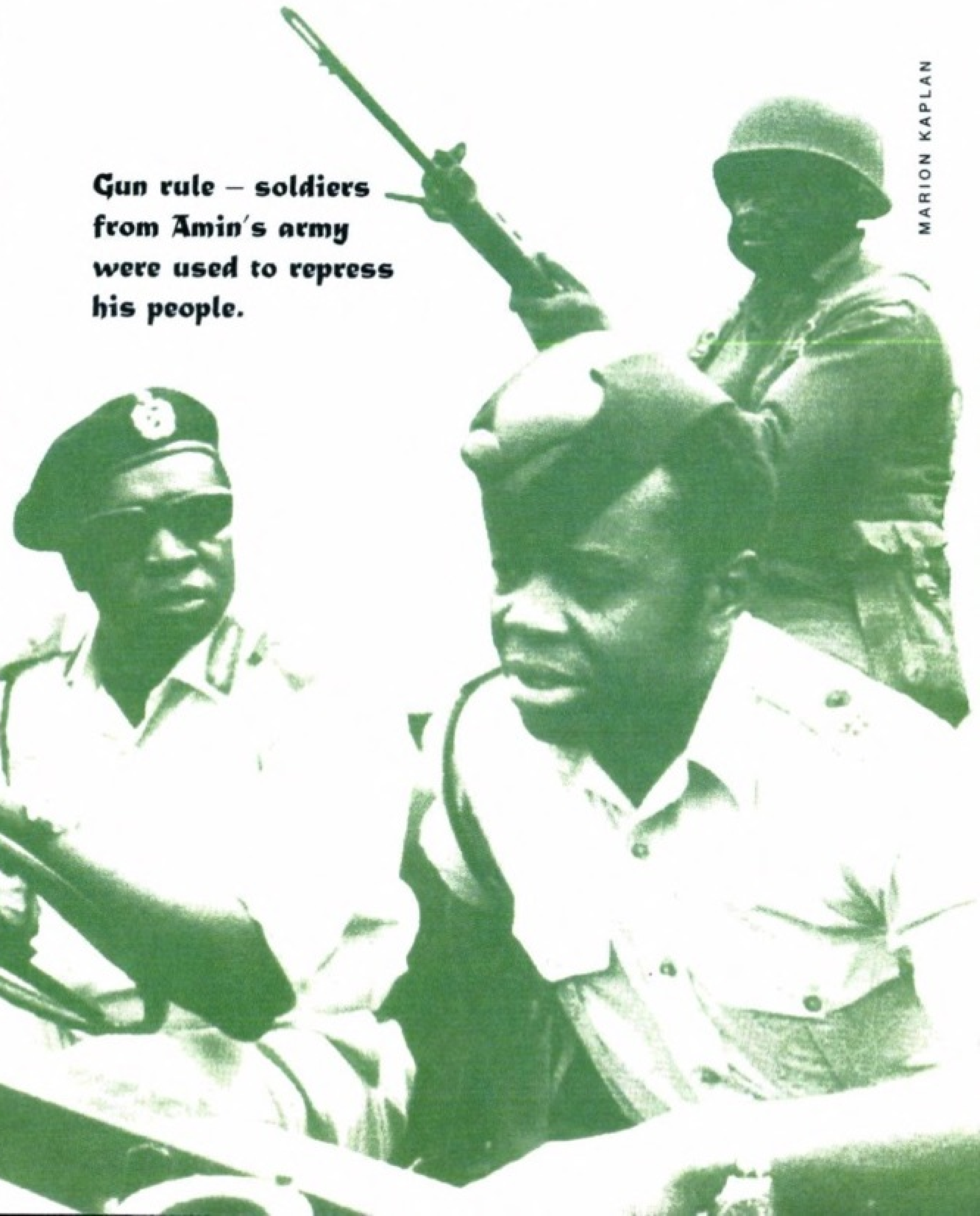
Lt-General Hassan al-Bashir takes over in **1989**, backed by the National Islamic Front (NIF) and bans all political parties. The cease-fire with the SPLA breaks down. The National Democratic Alliance, a coalition of Northern and Southern Sudanese opposition forces, is formed.

In August **1991** the SPLA splits. In September tens of thousands of people die from hunger-related diseases. In October the Khartoum army seals off the Nuba mountains and begins operations to drive out the Nuba and destroy SPLA strength in the area.

In March **1992** the Khartoum Government launches its largest-ever offensive against the SPLA – 100,000 people are displaced. There is fighting between different splinter groups in the South. The UN estimates the death toll in southern Sudan to have reached 1.3 million.

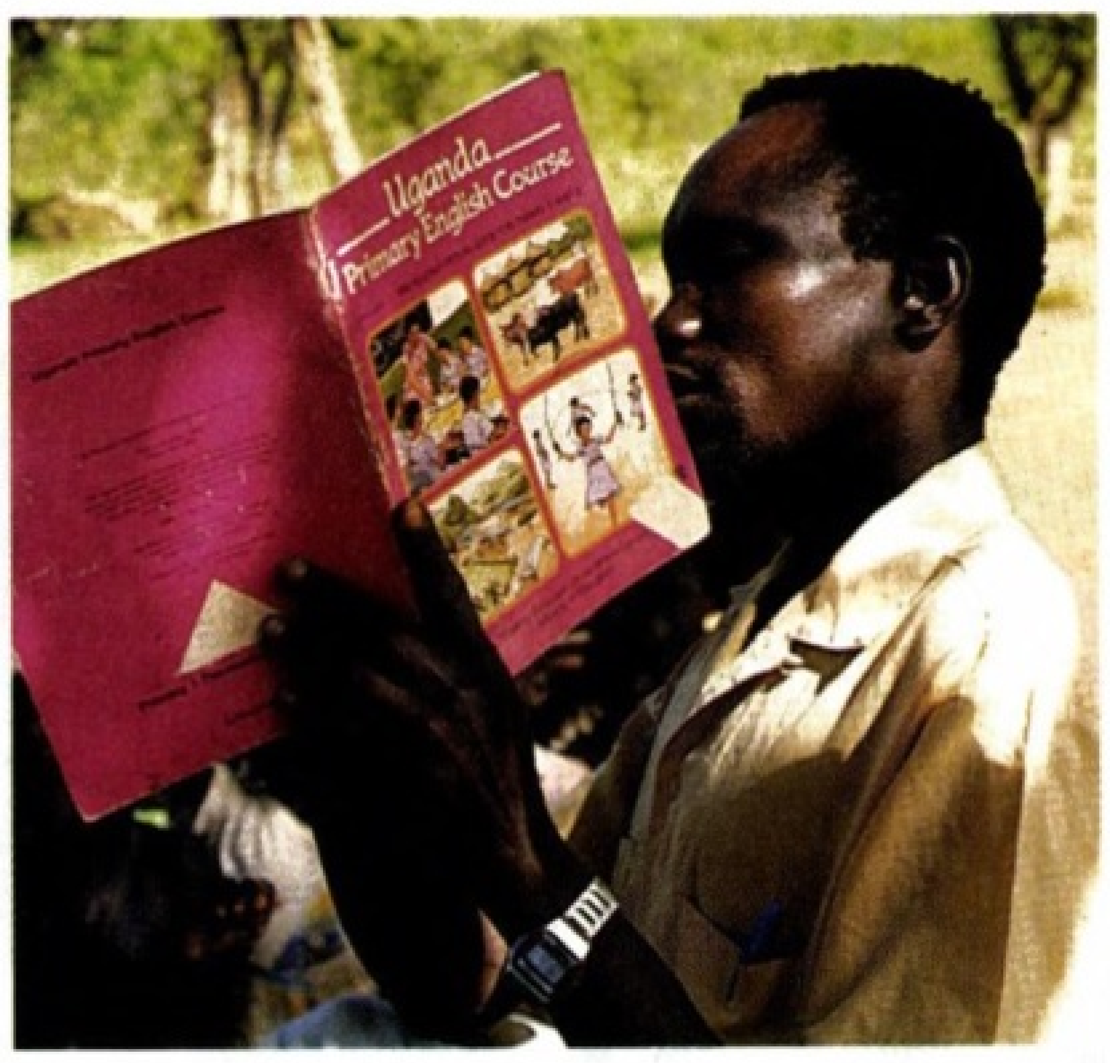
In March **1995** the Khartoum Government announces a cease-fire with the SPLA, which breaks down in August. Widespread arrests, detentions and torture by the Government continue. In April the Ugandan Government severs diplomatic relations with Khartoum. The Khartoum Government steps up aerial bombardments of the South.

Sources: MRG Report on Sudan, Amnesty Reports, World Refugee Surveys 1995 and 1996; UNHCR by numbers 1995, State of the World's Children 1995; The World Guide 1995/6.



Gun rule – soldiers from Amin's army were used to repress his people.

MARION KAPLAN



The last weapon

Refugees see education as the way – possibly the only way – to a better future. And so they are prepared to make many sacrifices to ensure that their children go to school...

'EDUCATION is *the* burning issue,' says Jacob, a slight man with a long list of complaints. The crowd around him who have been listening quietly to speaker after speaker suddenly bursts into spontaneous applause.

The meeting has been organized so that I can hear what refugees in southern Ikafe want to tell me. Everywhere I go people speak of the importance of education. An education in English for their children is one of the main reasons people say they came to Uganda. Some of those who originally fled to Zaire even made a second long and arduous journey over the Ugandan border so that their children could learn in English – the Ugandan curriculum is taught in English – rather than French.

'Children are our future,' says Johnson Mayen, deputy headteacher and an adviser to the Dinka people in Ikafe. 'We need to stay here so that they can continue their education. Education is our last weapon. Perhaps the only one we have left.'

'I have not been to school myself,' admits Fatima Amelie. 'But I want my daughter Loyce to go. She is already attending nursery school. I want her to learn.'

People are understandably bitter about the things that prevented them from attending school in Southern Sudan:

'Without education there can be no development,' stresses Moses Abure Daniel, headteacher at Imotong, a large primary school with over 1,000 pupils. 'In Sudan the war interrupted our children's education. This means that we will not have enough people to run our country when we finally get back on our feet. We will need teachers, doctors, lawyers and civil servants.'

'Education is our last weapon - perhaps the only one we have left'

In the Government-controlled areas of Sudan an escalating campaign of Islamization is depriving Christian children – and most Southern Sudanese are Christian – of the education that their parents want them to have. Even primary children are having to learn in Arabic. And now, the refugees tell me, if their children want to go to college back in Sudan, they have to pass an exam that includes not only Arabic but the study of the Qur'an.

I visit the school at Point M, behind Bidibidi, where the 11 classes ranged in front of blackboards sit with their pencils and exercise books. Some of the classrooms have grass roofs and no walls; the younger pupils are mainly being taught under trees.

'This is a P7 class, the oldest group,' said Raymond Mule Kenyi, the headteacher. 'Normally they would be aged about 13. But some because of the years of schooling they've missed are much older, 16 or 17.'

Each class has about 40 children. The total register is 611 pupils but only 483 are attending the day I visit – 321 boys and 162 girls. A neatly marked blackboard in Raymond's 'office' – a small grass-roofed hut – shows the roll call in each class for that day.

Attendance is low today, I'm told, because there has been no food distribution for a long time. 'The children are hungry and when they are hungry they can't study,' says Raymond sadly. 'There is also a problem because some of the children have no clothes – the ones they came with from Sudan are all worn out and not all have received second-hand garments. So the older ones in particular are ashamed to come to school naked.'

I had seen a number of children in other parts of the settlement, who, though not exactly 'naked', were wearing trousers which revealed all or most of their buttocks.

The scale of the operation is staggering. There are 40 primary schools in Ikafe, with 463 teachers and 14,750 students. Most buildings are just rough structures with no walls and straw roofs which mean the children have to be sent home when it rains.

The majority – 13,212 – are refugees. But there are also 1,538 Ugandans, proving that the rhetoric about integration and benefit to the existing community is not just a pipedream.

I visit one school at Okuyu in south Ikafe where the proportion of refugees to nationals is almost half and half. The teachers feel that the children benefit from working alongside each other. The school existed before the refugees arrived, with only a couple of hundred pupils. Today there are over 600.

The biggest difference between the refugees and the nationals is not language or culture, but the price of learning. For the refugees education is free (except for examination fees); local people have to pay. And it *is* expensive: tuition fees, examination fees, parent-teacher association fees. 'The parents are very hot about this,' explains John Baptist, a teacher in a blue shirt who does most of the talking.

The tensions do not seem to be between the refugees and the nationals, but rather against the system that divides them. President Museveni, who won the first proper presidential elections in Uganda in May this year, promised free education for the first four children in any Ugandan family. And the abolition of all extras except examination fees. If he keeps his promise he will be a popular man.

'The success of a school depends on the

Primary importance: refugee children learn in English and follow the Ugandan curriculum.

attitude of the parents,' says John. 'My view is that if a father is able to take tea every day at a café or to buy cigarettes, he can afford to send his child to school.'

'Yes,' added one of his colleagues. 'But you see because many of the Ugandans here were refugees themselves they lost everything. And now if they have a cow or a goat they feel it is a waste to sell it to pay school fees – they would rather keep it to pay their son's dowry.' John chips in again:

'It is a shame. If parents do not pay their children's school fees we have to send them home. And once a child is sent home, they often do not come back.'

This is particularly true of girls. Since primary education is free for the refugees, more of them are prepared – and indeed keen – to send their daughters as well as their sons to school. At Okuyu there are 261 refugee boys and 107 girls. But for Ugandans, who must pay, the ratio drops radically. There are 233 boys and only 67 girls. And in the top class there are 50 Ugandan boys and only two girls.

At the secondary level there are other problems – the main one being that there are no secondary schools in Ikafe. Then there is the question of cost. 'For the nationals, it is expensive, for the refugees impossible,' says John. 'A refugee has to obtain first division in the final primary examinations to qualify for a Ministry of Education scholarship. Otherwise they have nowhere to go for secondary education. And last year there were just 25 scholarships for refugees.'

Sister Margaret is a doughty Australian who heads the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). JRS is responsible for running the primary schools, supplying materials and recruiting and paying the teachers. I ask her about the problem of secondary education and she nods her head. 'The kids are keen. Last year we had 234 taking the final exams and 179 passed. This year 740 registered. But only 25 or so will be able to go study further. And the rest of the teenagers have nothing to do all day.'

I meet two of those teenagers in Bidibidi Base Camp. I am sitting on a wall outside my room writing up my notes when they suddenly appear round a corner and stand in front of me. 'Hello,' they say. 'Hello,' I reply. One is slightly older than the other but both are in their mid-teens. They are wearing T-shirts and look a little nervous. 'Hello. I am John.' The older one points to himself and then gestures at his companion. 'And this is John.' 'Well that's easy anyway,' I joke. He ignores me. His mission is a serious one.

'We are very eager to go to secondary school. We have completed our primary education in Sudan and then two years of secondary school there, but there is no bucket for us to attend school here.' (It takes me a while to figure out that by 'bucket' he means scholarship). 'So what we want to ask is – can you find us work here, any work, so that we can earn money to go to school? There is a good school in Yumbe but it costs money. And we want to have an education, to be a teacher and a nurse. We want to help our country. Can you help us?' ■

Keen to learn – like the other refugees, these children at the school in Point M see education as the key to developing their country once there is peace.

Under fire

THREE weeks after I left Ikafe the base camp at Bidibidi was attacked by gunmen, probably from the West Bank Nile Front but supported by some local people. No-one was killed but all staff were evacuated to Arua, the nearest local town. Young people from the Aringa area moved in to guard the camp with bows and arrows.

Southern Ikafe – where Izarugu and Yassin and Johnson and Martina live – also came under attack. There was looting and rape, though no-one quite knows who was responsible. Five thousand refugees fled to the north of the settlement.

Meanwhile, a wave of banditry and violence spread throughout northern Uganda, with refugees being particularly targeted. Koboko Camp, where the Ikafe refugees originally came from, was partially evacuated by the Red Cross after a rebel attack that left eight dead and 23 wounded; Rhino Camp, immediately south of Ikafe, was also partially evacuated following an attack. More recently, convoys of food heading north have come under fire from the Lord's Resistance Army, who also murdered one hundred and thirty refugees at Acholi-pii Camp south of Kitgum, in the north-east of Uganda.

President Museveni has sent heavy reinforcements to the north and vowed to 'crush and finish the rebels'. But to date the military have been unable to control the lawlessness.

The alliance between some discontented northerners and rebels backed by the Sudan Government is dangerous for everyone in the area. It also threatens the livelihoods of all Ugandans. Museveni's Government has markedly improved living conditions, partly by cutting the country's defence budget by nearly half in recent years. But this could be undone as military spending shoots up, which may mean reductions in education and health spending everywhere.

Although Museveni was re-elected in May with nearly three-quarters of the overall vote, opposition leader Paul Ssemogerere won between 80 and 90 per cent in northern Uganda. 'The election was a clear result of objection by northerners to President Museveni's government,' said one northern parliamentarian.

Back in Ikafe the refugees must be hunkering down waiting for the current violence to pass. But the attempt to foster self-reliance in the settlement has paid off. During the recent conflict the refugees were apparently able to organize their own food distribution without major outside intervention. And now staff are gradually returning to the base camps.

I phoned Tony Burdon, Oxfam's country representative in Uganda, just before press time, to find out what had happened. 'We all hope that reconciliation will take place' he said, 'and that the Government will regain control. But all we can say at the moment is that the future is uncertain.'

As I sit at my desk in Oxford, I remember all the refugees who spoke to me with such openness and showed me such generosity. I know that some of those I met will have had to leave their homes and their fields. I can only hope that their lives have not been shattered once again by the sound of gunfire and the shouts of frightened children. ■

On her bike: Alice Abau Elia sets off for home – but will she, and the rest of the refugees in Ikafe, be able to stay?

Action/Organizations

In **Aotearoa/New Zealand**, the ***Refugee and Migrant Service***, PO Box 11-236, Wellington, Tel: (04) 471 1932, provides a wide range of resettlement services for refugees and asylum seekers. ***Christian World Service***, PO Box 22-652, Christchurch. Tel: (03) 366 9274, has been lobbying Government to raise in the UN the issue of peace in Sudan, and also works with Sudanese in Uganda and in Sudan. ***OXFAM New Zealand***, PO Box 68-357, Auckland. Tel: (09) 358 1480 works in South Sudan.

In **Australia**, there is the ***Refugee Council of Australia***, Locked Bag 15, Camperdown PO, NSW 2050. Tel: (02) 9565 9111. Or, on Sudan, ***Community Aid Abroad***, 156 George St, Fitzroy, VIC 3065. Tel: (03) 9289 9444.

In **Britain**, ***CAFOD***, Romero Close, Stockwell Road, London SW9 9TY. Tel: (0)171 733 7900, is running a major advocacy campaign on Sudan, asking for more international support for the peace process. ***OXFAM***, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ. Tel: (0)1865 311 311, as well as working in Ikafe and with refugees in southern Sudan, has a debt campaign with a focus on Ugandan debt. ***The Refugee Council***, 3 Bondway, London SW8 1SF. Tel: (0)171 582 6922 provides practical services to asylum-seekers in the UK and campaigns for refugee rights in the UK and abroad. ***The Refugee Studies Centre***, Queen Elizabeth House, 21 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LA. Tel: (0) 1865 270267, provides courses and information for and about refugees. ***Skills for Southern Sudan*** 27 Northmoor Road, Oxford OX2 6UR, develops practical programmes for people who are needed to rehabilitate the country once peace is achieved.

In **Canada** the ***Centre for Refugee Studies***, Suite 322, York University, 4700 Keele St, North York, Ontario M3J 1P3. Tel: (416) 736 5663, does teaching, research and documentation on refugee issues around the world. ***The Canadian Council for Refugees***, 6839 A, Drolet #302, Montreal, Quebec H2S 2T7. Tel: (514) 277 1447, is the umbrella organization working with refugees across Canada, undertaking advocacy and public education.

In the **United States**, the ***US Committee for Refugees***, 1717 Massachusetts Ave NW, Suite 701, Washington DC, 20036. Tel: (202) 347 3507, works in refugee emergencies and advocates for support and fair treatment with the US Government. ***The American Refugee Committee***, 2344 Nicollet Ave South, #350, Minneapolis, Minn 55404 (612) 872 7060 runs a series of support programs for refugees in Asia, Africa and Europe.

Reading

There are too many general books on refugees to be able to list them here, so I have concentrated on background reading on Uganda and Sudan. ***Amnesty International*** have succinct reports on the human-rights situations in both countries. ***African Rights***, 11 Marshalsea Road, London SE1 1EP, Tel: 0171 717 1224 publishes some interesting analyses of the situation in Sudan.

UGANDA

Changing Uganda: the dilemmas of structural adjustment and revolutionary change, edited by Holger Bernt Hansen and Michael Twaddle (James Currey 1991). Chapters by different authors on a whole range of issues. ***Uganda since Independence: a story of unfulfilled hopes*** by Phares Mutibwa (Hurst and Co, London, 1992) A clear-sighted account of Uganda's troubles by someone who lived through them. ***Imposing Aid – emergency assistance to refugees*** by Barbara Harrell-Bond (Oxford University Press 1986). A detailed account of the experience of Ugandan refugees in Sudan in the 1980s.

SUDAN

Sudan: a nation in the balance by Chris Peters (Oxfam, 1996) A brief introduction to the country and its people in reader-friendly style. ***Sudan: conflict and minorities*** by Peter Verney et al (Minority Rights Group, 1995.) An overview of Sudan's history. ***Requiem for the Sudan; war, drought and disaster relief on the Nile***. J Millard Burr and Robert O Collins (Westview Press, Inc, 1995). Why the conflict happened and what makes it continue.

Thanks to: Simon Ameny, Jamie Balfour-Paul, Tony Burdon, Ros David, Sarah Hayward, Nick Leader, Ian Leggett, Koos Neefjes, Geoff Sayer, and OXFAM. To Lina Payne for her support and detailed research. To my partner Chris and my children Rosa and George for putting up with my absence. To Jenny Matthews for her photographic skills and endless stamina, and to all the refugees and Ugandans in Ikafe who gave me such a warm welcome, especially those featured in this magazine.

The **NI** Interview

Harry Wu

Vanessa Baird meets China's big 'trouble-maker'.

HARRY WU has a reputation for being proud, difficult and headstrong. He's also resolutely honest. As a geology student in Beijing in 1960 Wu was asked what he thought about the communist system. His reply? 'Not much.' That comment earned him 19 years inside a Chinese prison labour camp.

I met him in Oxford between two appointments on his hectic tour of Europe, calling for boycotts of goods made by slave labour in Chinese prison camps. He looks his age – 59 – and admits feeling 'very tired'. Nonetheless, he has a powerful presence and a determined energy. This is a man not easily crushed or knocked off course.

After nearly two decades of mental and physical torture he could have accepted the quiet life of an exile in the US. But in 1991 Harry Wu returned to China to do an exposé of the *laogai* or labour-camp system. His film was beamed around the world courtesy of ITV and CBS. Wu made another trip in the summer of 1995 to unearth more dirt on the labour camps. This time the Chinese authorities were waiting for him at the airport.

'They asked me: "Why are you coming back here? You are a big trouble-maker. We have been waiting for you." They talked about wanting to "solve the problem" — their euphemism for wanting to eliminate me.'

> ***They talked about wanting to 'solve the problem' – their euphemism for wanting to eliminate me.***

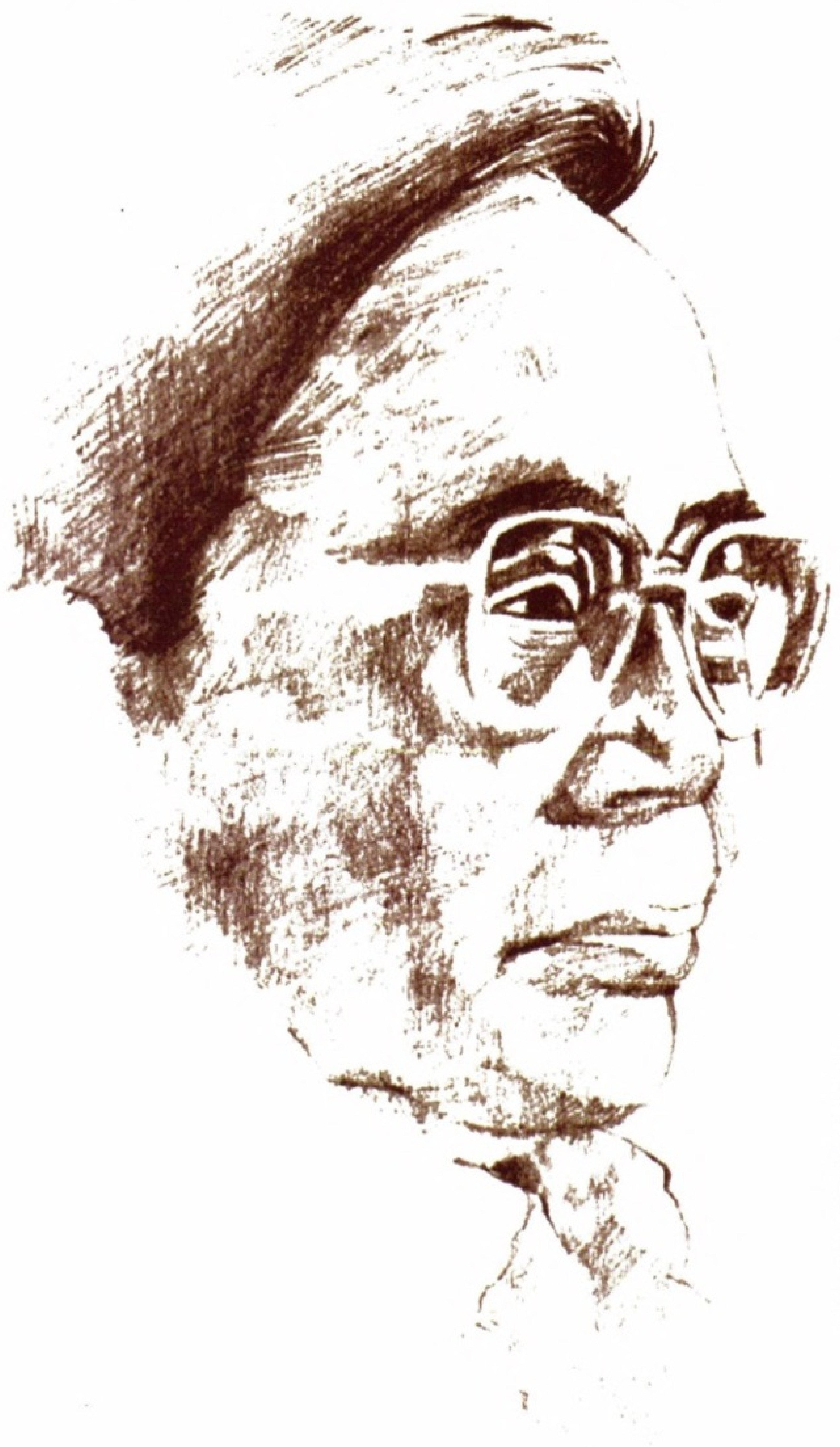


ILLUSTRATION BY ALAN HUGHES

Wu was then arrested and observed round-the-clock for 66 days, charged with being a spy and entering the country under false documents. The spy charges he dismisses as nonsense. 'The information I was seeking was for the media, not intelligence service. You must understand that the Chinese Government lies all the time,' he says emphatically. 'It lies to its own people; it lies to other governments. The Government says there are no political prisoners in China; they say the country doesn't export missiles to Pakistan. They lied about me and to me. Communist Party members lie to themselves. Nobody really believes in communism any longer in China. They just believe in power.'

He was tried and sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment. But another sentence was tagged on first: he was to be expelled from China immediately. This face-saving move was in response to mounting pressure from the international community, particularly the US where Wu is now a citizen.

His US-based Laogai Research Foundation estimates that a third of China's tea output is the product of slave labour. But because the *laogai* system is so intertwined with state control of industry, it is difficult to say for sure which Chinese products are 'clean' and which are not. Instead Wu proposes a boycott of Chinese toys. 'China is too big a market for a total boycott. But we can target toys. Evidence shows that many of these are made in prisons. We have kind thoughts when we give a child a toy. But what if that gift has been made by blood and tears?'

It is not just the exploitation of labour that makes the *laogai* system inhumane. As he details in his book *Bitter Winds*, the treatment of prisoners is cruel and sadistic – crushing souls as well as bodies. 'There are no gas chambers in the *laogai*. But there are spiritual gas chambers. The *laogai* turn people into wrecks, spiritually and mentally.'

So what about him? Did being arrested last year bring back all the old fears and horrors?

'I feared nothing. I know these people. I had 19 years of it. Of course I did not want to lose my freedom. But I thought: don't think about it or you will become weak.'

I ask if after his exile he became disenchanted with the West, like former Soviet dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn?

'No. Solzhenitsyn had a strong Slavic and Orthodox Christian identity. My religious education stopped at 11 when the Communists took over. I have prayed only twice. Once when I saw an inmate in prison die; and once under torture.

'I took American nationality in June 1994 as a convenience, but I did not feel a part of the US. After the trouble I had in China last summer, I feel differently. People in the US cared about what was happening to me. When I returned they put up yellow ribbons and that felt very good. They cared about my liberty.'

Now Harry Wu is trying to get a new word into the English dictionary: '*laogai*'. 'People still talk about the Holocaust and the Soviet gulags. It's important to remember these things, but they are in the past. The *laogai* system is happening in China right now.' ■

You can contact the Laogai Research Foundation at PO Box 361375, Milpitas, CA 95036 US. Tel: 408 263 8477.

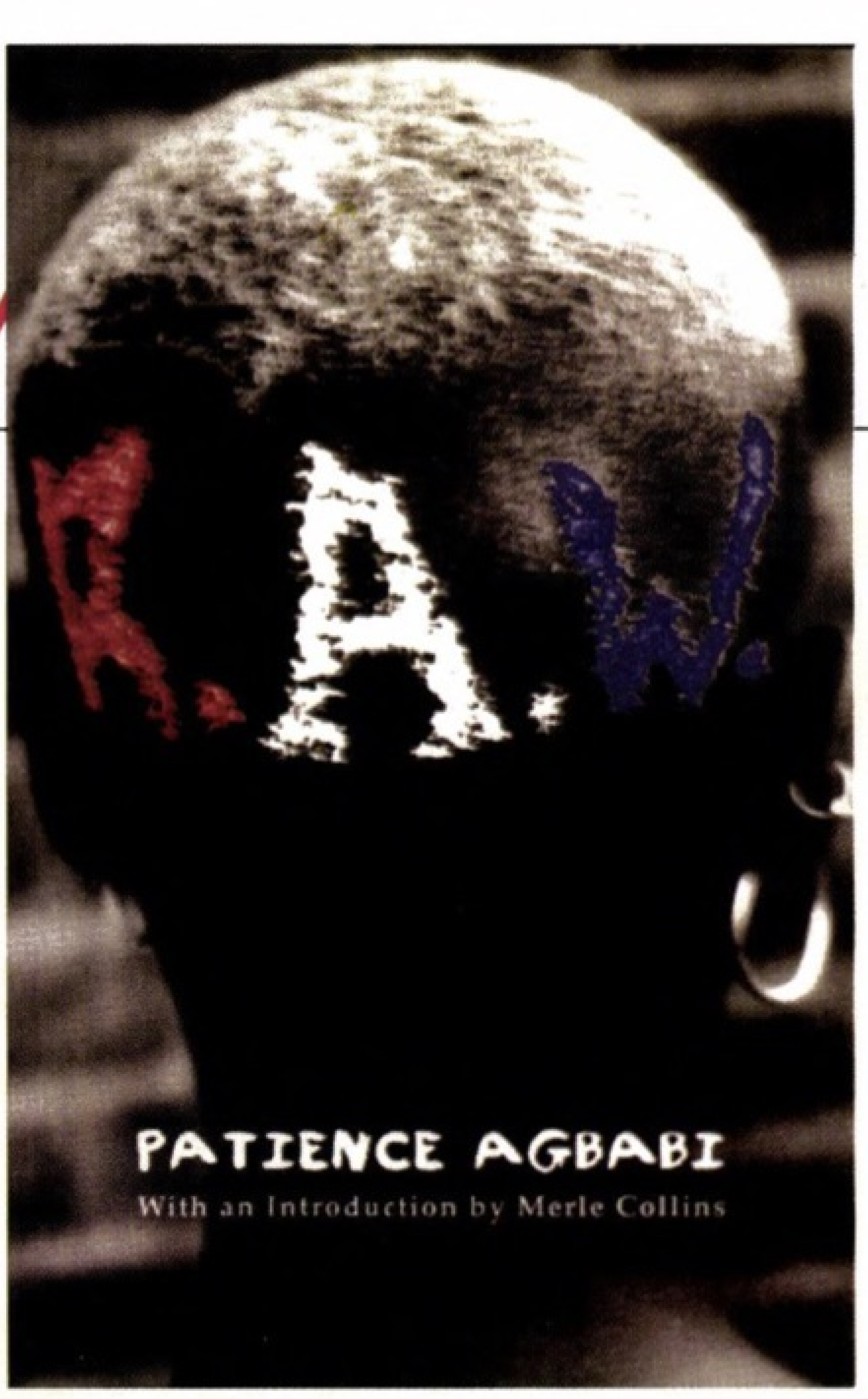
Review

books

RAW
by **Patience Agbabi**
(Gecko Press, ISBN 0-9524067-1-3)

Blood on the Page
by **Labi Siffre**
(Xavier, ISBN 0-9520942-1-5)

Red Poets Society 2
by **Various**
(Cymru Goch, PO Box 661, Wrecsam, LL11 1QU)



POLITICAL POETRY is always somewhat suspect. The weight of a message can sink verse just as effectively as an over-academic style. Poetry lives and breathes by its own rules, and in its resistance to prescriptions it is political in its own way. But the heart gladdens at these three volumes of fighting verse that, in the main, don't compromise the muse.

Performance poet Patience Agbabi's debut collection is an unadulterated treat, the poetry leaping off the page, instead of dying on it as much spoken-word stuff tends to do. Agbabi uses tight sprung rhythms, a driving rap style with an impeccable sense of timing – the poems never outstay their inventiveness. When thinking of labels such as black or lesbian to write about her, one finds them hollow, for while her poetry engages constantly with issues of race, sexuality and gender (to say nothing of the political system), she celebrates a pansexuality and an awareness of race and culture that values the individual rather than stereotypes:

Everyone's born / no-one's found
until they find themselves /
hurting in the back of the throat /
because they've swallowed /
serious pepper / painful as truth
(from 'Serious Pepper')

This isn't victim verse: it's free from specialist attitudes. Lurking within its momentum are unexpected subtleties. Enjoy.

Politics ☆☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆☆

Take no prisoners / Not even yourself
Go where everyone / tells you not to
Go where you yourself / are afraid
Safety wins no place /
in the pantheon of passion /
(from 'Blood on the Page')

Right from the outset Labi Siffre's collection establishes a ranging, exploratory attitude which is quite the best thing about it. Siffre is searching for an ideal citizenship in our world, a sense of belonging which allows asking bold questions and sometimes coming up with the wrong answers. Sardonic, tender and surreal by turns, the poems create a worldly-wise persona for Siffre and a feeling of being stifled by straight society.

Siffre is better known as a singer – remember *Something Inside So Strong?* – and his poetry sometimes reads like song lyrics, a touch flat, a touch too self-absorbed. But there is also much to commend, a bluesy depth and honesty which works well late at night.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆

ON THE BACK COVER of **Red Poets Society 2** is a quote from the Welsh Arts Council about their earlier anthology – 'Red? We prefer them dead'. This smells suspiciously of a wind-up but it reminds me of my initial reaction to this volume – 'Oh God! Poetry by Welsh lefties'. Expecting sloganeering doggerel I was soon won over by the wit and quality of the poetry. This collection has a more obvious political agenda than the other two and its identity is pretty firmly Welsh, but this focuses rather than narrows it. Sure there are a few duds but on the whole this is a blast of a book with enough pith to please a camel.

Here are the closing verses of 'Obscenities' (which begins with graffiti in a motorway toilet!) by Lloyd Rees, a good indication of the tenor of the book

There is a leftover argot / like punk and aggro
on estate walls in the sticks /
and there too the willing dicks /
and phone numbers in copperplate /
for a trembling date. /

Not these. / These are not obscenities. /
It's the 9" headlines slagging /
sanity and sense, bragging /
of Britishness and victory / that make me sick.

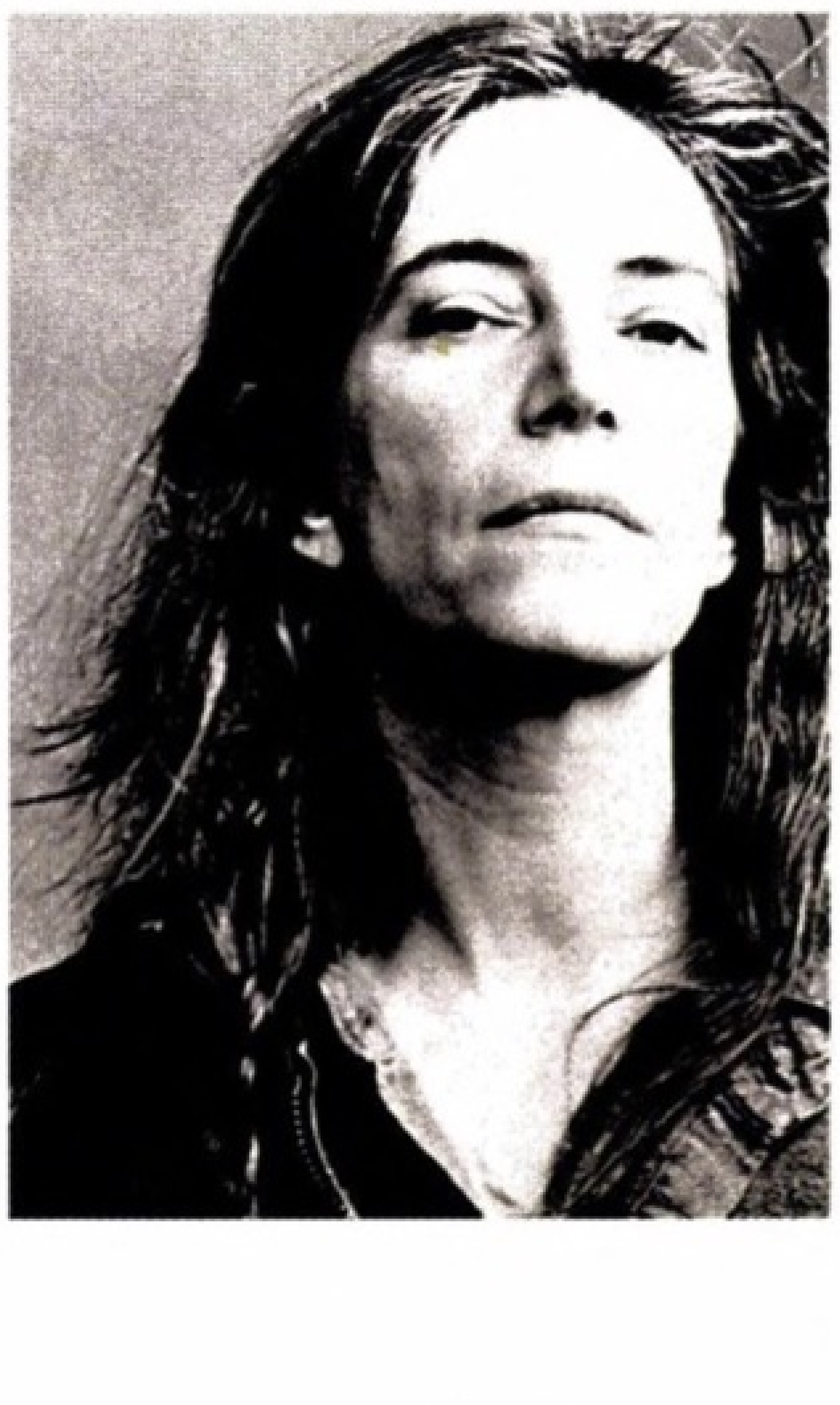
Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆ **UP**

music

Gone Again
by **Patti Smith**
(Arista CD/MC 74321 38474 2(9)/ 74321 38474 4 (3))

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE to quantify Patti Smith's impact on rock music. It's 21 years since Smith's portrait stared out from the cover of her debut album, *Horses*, and into a world that was about to irrevocably change. A poet who had been a teenage Rimbaud freak, she embodied defiance, strength and a grace of word and limb. Punk rock would not have existed without her, or at least, its liberating, revolutionary energies could not have. Single-handedly, Smith redefined the position of women in what was still a very male medium.

And now she's back with her first album in eight years; the result is awe-inspiring. Predicated on loss – the deaths of close friend and photographer Robert Mapplethorpe in 1989, of husband and co-writer Fred 'Sonic' in 1994, followed a few months later by brother, Todd – this album might be a work of mourning. But it's not this alone. The cleansing fires of *Horses* are present, their substance tempered over time. Smith's defining qualities are here in abundance, but so too is a ringing sense of compassion.



Smith's voice carries its full range of emotional colour; but the music now offers up new possibilities. Still rock-based, it's wider than before. There are some hissing, fizzing atmospherics: the guitar scratches that introduce 'About A Boy' (a tribute to Kurt Cobain) completely electrify the air around it.

Poetic cadences dominate, Smith's voice achieving a contradictory combination of measured effect with freeform spontaneity. The spiralling energy is less sexual than on earlier albums, more transcendental. Smith's Cobain commemoration, for example, fades into silence, riding alone on Smith's panting breath. Life's breath? Or the last gasp before death? Ultimately, it doesn't matter. Smith's great achievement is to stress the intimate connection between life, death and all points in between. **Gone Again** is a majestic return to the public arena.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆☆ **LG**

music

Takiririllasu

by **Rumillajta** (*Rumi CD/MC 951*)

LILTING, EVOCATIVE, catchy, haunting, **Takiririllasu** is the latest offering from Rumillajta, one of Bolivia's folk music groups best-known in the West. The title is Quechua for 'Let's sing and celebrate together' and, indeed, it celebrates the band's fifteenth year together. As with previous releases, traditional melodies are mixed with tunes composed by group members and other artists.

Their style may be contemporary and the music largely aimed at Western audiences, but Rumillajta have remained faithful to the principles which have guided them from the outset: a deep respect for their cultural inheritance and a reverence for the beautiful but harsh environment of the Andean highlands. In **Takiririllasu** they have produced a richly-textured, predominantly instrumental collection which displays a variety of rhythms and moods, ranging from, for example, the intimacy of a lover's plea in 'Negra del Alma', to the vast open spaces of 'Cielo y Montaña'; the festive bustle of 'Jina Jina' to the light, *charango*-produced ripple of 'Arpita Venezolana'.

rumillajta
ANDEAN MUSIC FROM BOLIVIA
TAKIRIRILLASU

If 'Andean music' means 'panpipes' to you, you won't be disappointed – but expect more than just pipes. This is a superb collection which will have you humming and tapping from beginning to end. It's a must for anyone who enjoys Andean music – and for those unfamiliar with the genre, start here!

Politics ☆☆☆

Entertainment☆☆☆☆☆ **AW**

(Also available on cassette, from Rumillajta Recordings, PO Box 544, Bristol, BS99 1NP)

STAR RATING

Excellent	☆☆☆☆☆
Very good	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Poor	☆

Reviews by **Urvi Patel, Louise Gray** and **Alison Ware**
Reviews editor: **Vanessa Baird**

THE **CLASSIC**

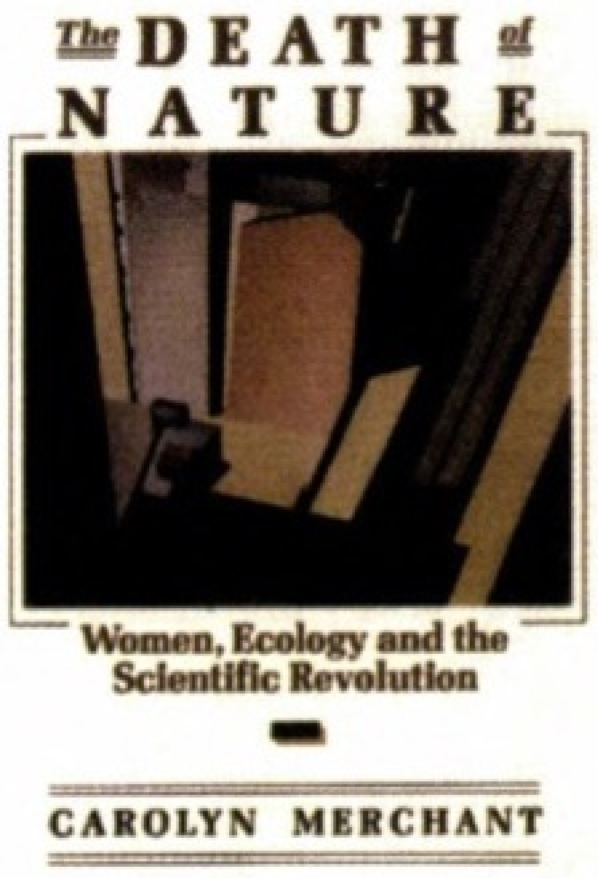
The Death of Nature

...being the book that became a seminal text of eco-feminism.

CAROLYN MERCHANT'S **The Death of Nature** was one of the first texts to look at the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from a feminist and ecological perspective. Reading it as a young graduate, I found much which helped me to understand my personal alienation from physics – the subject which I had thought would enable me to understand the universe.

Merchant argues that, during the shift towards empirical science, the underlying metaphor of the world changed from one of a living organism infused with internal spirit, to that of a dead, passive machine moved by external forces. The result of this shift in perspective was to legitimate the exploitation of nature for the economic profit of human beings. In the long-term, this has led to our present ecological crisis.

Many have suggested that we may currently be undergoing a change in worldview as profound as that of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when the thoughts and theories of René Descartes, Isaac Newton and others helped revolutionize ways of thinking about the world. The rise of quantum mechanics, chaos theory, and the thermodynamics of Ilya Prigogine all challenge the mechanistic view of the world as being made up of particles which obey simple, linear laws. The emerging worldview of modern science, with its emphasis on the importance of process and context, has more in common with older, organic ideas about the cosmos than it has with mechanism.



The organic view of nature saw the Earth as female and this identity has led to women's history being linked with the history of ecological change. Merchant makes it clear that concepts both of nature and of women are social and historical constructions, not reflections of essential characteristics. She argues that in challenging society's domination of nature ecofeminists today are attempting to overturn constructions of both women and nature as passive and subordinate.

Throughout human history people have lived in immediate, organic relation with the natural world. The root metaphor binding together the self, society and the cosmos has been that of an organism. But the image of a female Earth has two sides: the nurturing mother, but also wild, disordered, uncontrollable nature which sent droughts, storms and general chaos. The two dominant ideas of the Scientific Revolution were to see nature as a mechanism, and to seek control and mastery over nature.

These two ideas were able to legitimate the activities of industrial capitalism, with its emphasis on economic growth, the accumulation of capital, and the exploitation of natural resources. If people believe the Earth to be a living organism, a nurturing mother, then they will not want to mine into her entrails or cut down her forests. If, however, the planet is a lifeless machine, then it becomes acceptable to reshape it in the pursuit of profit.

Human society and culture exist in a dialectical relationship with the natural environment. Changes in one lead to changes in the other, and during the period from 1500 to 1700 the result was to create an accelerated exploitation of nature and of people. An increase in mining activity and the introduction of machines meant that people's direct experiences of nature came to be that of control and human alteration of the environment. Two kinds of machines became more common in the everyday lives of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europeans. The first kind were windmills, cranes and pumps which magnified human and animal muscle power. The second were clocks which were models of the ordered motions of the sun and planets. The first became symbols of power and the second of order – the two most important aspects of the mechanistic worldview.

Several simultaneous revolutions were occurring within the different sciences of cosmology, medicine, chemistry and physics, but all tended towards the replacement of organic ideas with metaphors of the machine. Merchant looks at the ideas of several of the 'fathers' of modern science: Francis Bacon, William Harvey, René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes and Isaac Newton, placing them within a wider cultural and ecological context. She argues that the language they used was not just an individual's choice of words, but was also indicative of cultural assumptions about nature. However, the organic worldview was never entirely suppressed. Modern ecology is returning to such a view and Merchant argues that if we are to avert ecological crisis we will have to look again at integrating human needs into the cycles of nature. A re-evaluation of the ideas associated with pre-industrial organic worldviews may aid this process. ■

Elizabeth Sourbut

The Death of Nature by **Carolyn Merchant** is published by Harper and Row, San Francisco and London, 1983, reprinted 1990.

Curiosities

QUESTIONS THAT HAVE ALWAYS INTRIGUED YOU ABOUT THE WORLD WILL APPEAR IN THIS, YOUR SECTION, AND BE ANSWERED BY OTHER READERS. PLEASE ADDRESS YOUR ANSWERS AND QUESTIONS TO 'CURIOSITIES'.

How did the Chinese custom of foot-binding originate?

● I remember reading about it in a book about 76 years ago. It began because one of the princesses was born with club feet, so they passed a cruel law that all female babies have their feet bound up to be like the princess.

DP Britten
Rhonda, Wales

● The origins are obscure but there is one theory: it was introduced through a form of dancing in the Tang dynasty (during the tenth and eleventh centuries). The dancers practised a little foot-binding and the idea caught on for two reasons. First, female liberty and intellectual freedom were increasingly frowned upon and crippling women seemed the perfect way to take away their freedom. Second, the bound foot resembled the lotus flower which was sacred to the Chinese. (See *The Tyranny of Beauty* by Arline and John Liggett.)

BM Coote
Lower Hutt, Aotearoa/New Zealand

● The fashion of foot-binding women came about the during the Southern Sung Dynasty (1127-1279 AD) in the capital of Hangchow. Women's position in society had never been very high but at this time had declined further. It became fashionable amongst the rich to take concubines and it was a mark of status to be able to support women so disabled that they could not do any kind of physical work. It gave women an awkward and doll like gait that had an erotic attraction that appealed to the affluent classes and therefore became widely fashionable.

This I would describe as the 'golden era' of Chinese civilization. Life in the towns and cities was highly sophisticated. They had great shopping malls, coffee houses, theatres and the like. Any person who sought a place in society meticulously cultivated the arts; paintings, calligraphy and antiques were much valued. The novel and short story also came into vogue.

Europe learnt of the practice of foot-binding through Friar Odoric of Pordenone who had lived in Peking in the 1320s. He was an avid collector of all things Chinese.

DE Cooper-King
London, England

AWAITING YOUR ANSWERS

Is it true that before the state of Israel was born this century, Jewish people had only ruled this land for 60 out of the last 3000 years?

David Salter
Cardiff, Wales

Most alphabets have a similar order, even where the script is different. For example, the Russian and Greek alphabets have a similar order to the Roman. Where did this order come from?

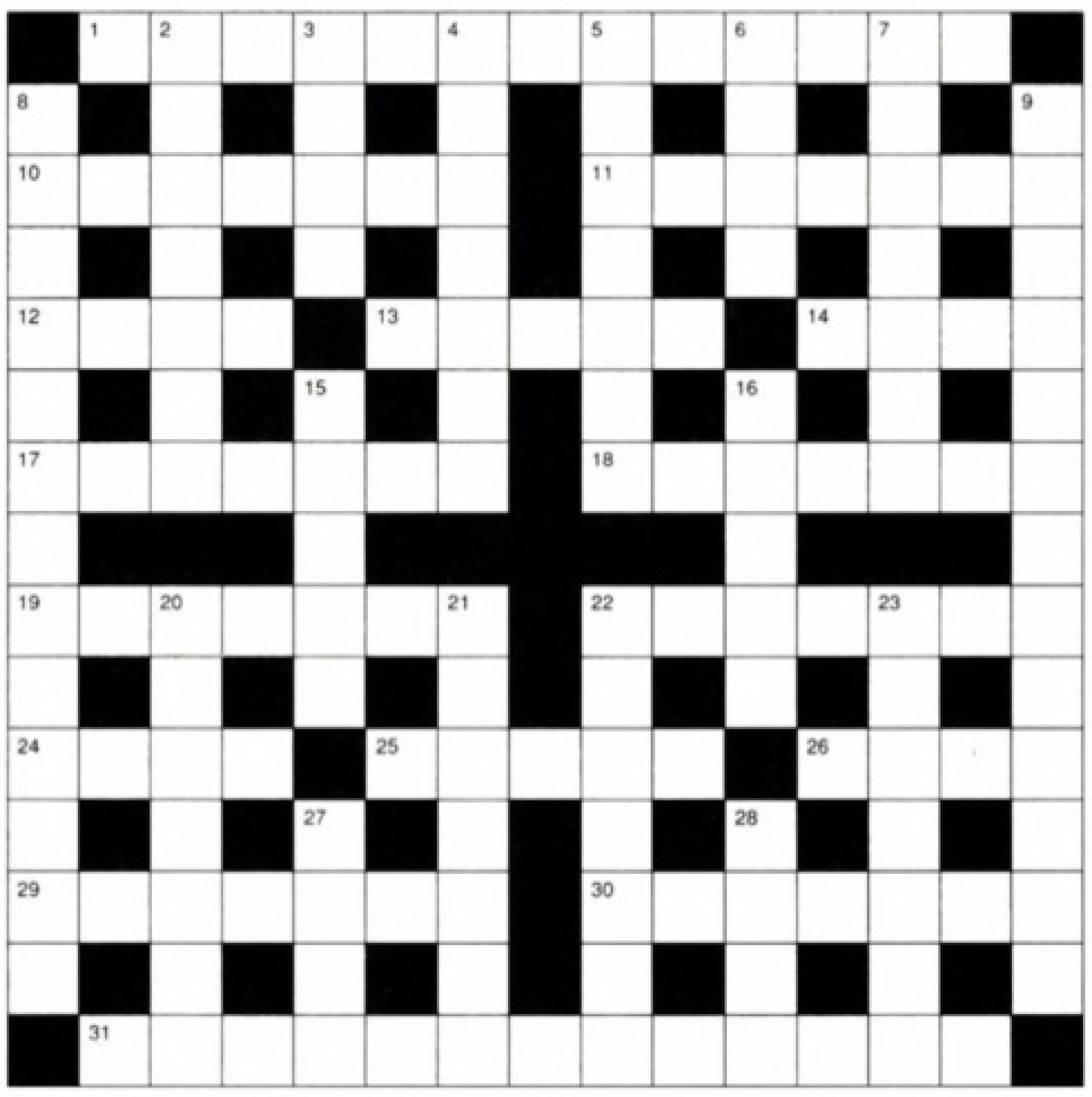
Robert Fletcher

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR ANSWERS PLEASE SEND THEM TO **CURIOSITIES, NEW INTERNATIONALIST, 55 RECTORY ROAD, OXFORD OX4 1BW, UK,** OR TO YOUR LOCAL NI OFFICE (SEE INSIDE FRONT COVER FOR ADDRESSES).

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS SECTION ARE NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF **NI**.

The **NI** Crossword

No. 3 by **Axe**



CRYPTIC

Across

1 Danish assumed, wrongly, that he is a dictator (6,7)
10 Old Gael takes first class return to European country (7)
11 Condition of the princess's when at leisure (7)
12 Town on the Mosel? Not the right bank (4)
13 Miser performs for Muslim leaders (5)
14 Opening the slit... (4)
17 ...he throws the jug... (7)
18 with a following wind, clear out of doors (4-3)
19 Ship, departing Canaries city, arrives at another island (2,5)
22 Plants, but varieties need water or mustard, perhaps! (7)
24 A weight of gold taken from site of antiquity? (4)
25 African capital commonly invested in nomad displacement (5)
26 The state capitals of Tasmania, Assam, Uzbekistan and Hawaii are in chaos (4)
29 Cowardly character gets the bird (7)
30 Swan caught in downpour on the way back to the islands (7)
31 EU oil plan sank unceremoniously on the Russian coastline (4,9)

Down

2 The morning habit I am in is going around (7)
3 Expected – about start of ninth – to find the sand (4)
4 Army man controlling Burma? (7)
5 Experience German and therefore it follows (7)
6 Indifferent to love after Mayday (2-2)
7 I'm holding glass, aiming initially for the beach (7)
8 The group approach to function on public affairs? (5,8)
9 Desert following film concerning troubled African territory (7,6)
15 The state of being hot or cold, it's said (5)
16 The author of French politics? (2,3)
20 The professionals have six in the ring to see the rider (7)
21 Deliberately put Italian poet's name under article (7)
22 Eleven seen as the number involved with sing-song – it's the wine. (7)
23 Fix character from The Merchant of Venice, so it's reported, to a place near Lisbon (7)
27 Ladies' fingers knead pakoras without a second thought (4)
28 Deeds attributed to Luke? (4)

QUICK

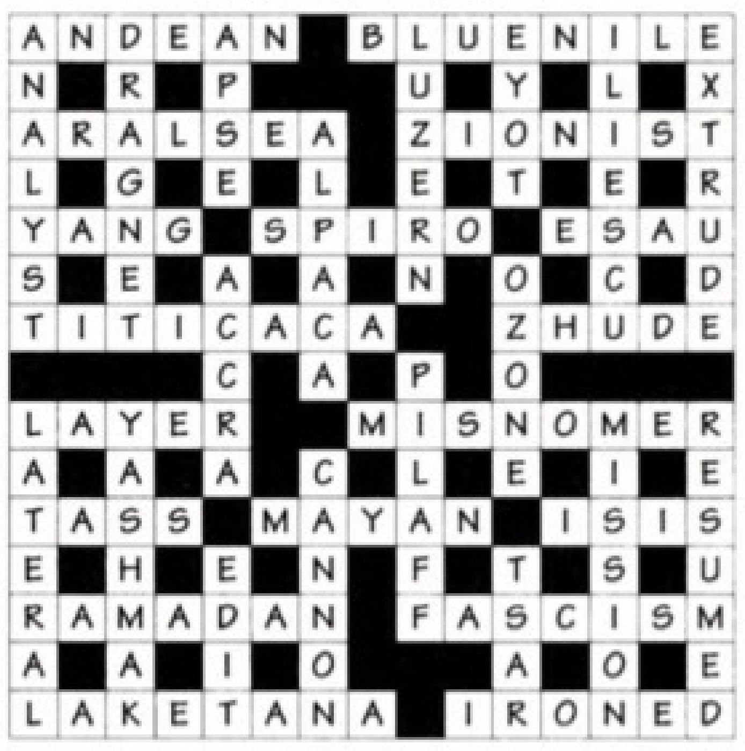
Across

1 Middle Eastern leader, a member of the Ba'ath Party, became head of state in 1979 (6,7)
10 Nation where Zog was proclaimed king in 1928 (7)
11 Unhealthy state of body or mind, usually caused by infection (7)
12 Row, rank or layer (4)
13 Islamic potentates (5)
14 Express (especially anger) (4)
17 Earthenware container for water or wine (7)
18 Alfresco (4-3)
19 One of the smallest of the Canary Islands (2,5)
22 *Lepidum sativum* is one of many varieties of these salad crops (7)
24 Site of classical city in Turkey, alternatively-named Ilium (4)
25 Familiar name of East African capital (5)
26 The 'Beehive' state! (4)
29 Fowl domesticated from the *Gallus gallus* breed of SE Asia (7)
30 Indian Ocean archipelago name, positioned between the Andaman Islands and Sumatra (7)
31 Arctic promontory partially encircling the White Sea (4,9)

Down

2 Surrounding, enveloping (7)
3 A barkhan is a desert version of this landform (4)
4 The name the military government has given to Burma (7)
5 Endure or withstand (7)
6 Undistinguished, unexceptional (2-2)
7 Rio waterfront (7)
8 Views on government through a group, not an individual, standpoint 5,8)
9 North African territory occupied by Morocco but fighting for independence (7,6)
15 South American country whose chief port is Valparaiso (5)
16 French politician, leader of the Nationalist movement (2,3)
20 Condition, small print (7)
21 Musical tempo – literally at walking pace – moderately slow (7)
22 Red wine grown mainly from the Sangiovese grape in Tuscany (7)
23 City and peninsula of central Portugal (7)
27 Green vegetable of tropical and sub-tropical regions, with red and yellow flowers, the *Hibiscus esculentus* (4)
28 The book of the New Testament which describes the apostles' work in developing the early Church (4)

LAST MONTH'S SOLUTION



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R	A	M	A	D	A	N	■	F	A	S	C	I	S	M
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L	A	K	E	T	A	N	A	■	I	R	O	N	E	D

Blowdown

David Ransom watches the fall of a folly.

For many years we lived in the shade of Rowan Court – a tower block named after an ash tree – much as one might live in the shadow of a mountain. The sun set behind it, the wind blew around it, the clouds sometimes descended over it and legends grew up about the people who lived there. Cast upwards into purgatory, cut off from the world by jammed, urine-drenched elevators, they were said to descend onto the streets only at night to feed off the local populace by mugging.

Late one night I too was set upon by a group of their young. They formed a circle around me and waved bottles at my head.

'Oi! You!' they said.

'Who, me?' I replied. My knees began to shake uncontrollably. Somehow the word 'love' slipped from my lips as I thought of conciliatory phrases.

'Right! That's it!' said one of them. 'This one's a bleeding nancy-boy [gay]!'

Then, for reasons I cannot explain, I asked: 'Do you know who I am?' and began to search in my mind for someone awesome to impersonate: a distant cousin of the Kray Twins (celebrated, if incarcerated, hard men of local folklore) perhaps.

They began to whisper among themselves. It became apparent that I was not the only one under the influence of mood-altering substances of one kind or another.

'I am... I am...' I began. But it was no good. 'I live round the corner,' I said tamely.

'Really?' said one of them.

'Just there, with my daughter,' I said.

'No!'

'Yes!'

'Oh! Sorry mate!' he said. 'We didn't realize. Pleased to meet you!'

We shook hands and introduced ourselves by false names.

'Watch out for yourself!' they said.

'You too!' I called after them as I turned away, expecting a heavy blow to the back of my head. It never came.

DAVID RANSOM

Best forgotten but worth remembering: Rowan Court subsides before averted eyes.

That was in 1976, not long after we had moved into a house on a street that was all but derelict, near a patch of grass and plain trees known as London Fields. Built in the 1850s, our street was heading for oblivion, like similar ones nearby that had been demolished just a couple of decades earlier to make way for the Holly Street Estate and its four 20-storey, system-built 'tower blocks' of public housing.

In the early 1980s, when fear of urban riots heralded each spring as surely as the blossom, the fate of our street still hung in the balance. By the end of the decade, however, we had become 'Mapledene Village' in real-estate-speak, a place fit for property speculation and the offspring of the financial 'Big Bang' in the City of London, just down the road.

Holly Street, on the other hand, had ascended into hell.

A few years ago I moved away. But I just had to go back this year for the blowdown, the ignominious execution of Rowan Court. Its people had been 'rehoused' and had vanished forever. The tower now stood gaunt and gutted, a skeleton draped with a blindfold of banners: 'Down with the old! Up with the new!'

At midday almost precisely, injections of high explosive spurted like blood from its joints. A shudder, then floors hurtled down behind the rooftops, and for an instant we seemed to travel upwards as we watched. A billowing dark cloud, a surge of light, a pyramid of rubble and it was gone, flattened in four seconds. Everyone agreed that Rowan Court had never looked better.

What we had witnessed was, nonetheless, quite insane. Thousands of people in London, hundreds of millions beyond, have nowhere to live. Two hundred serviceable homes lay in ruins before us – and we applauded.

How had we come to this? No good ever came from demolishing the old 'slum' (now 'desirable') houses to make way for Rowan Court. What good would come from demolishing Rowan Court? The people who had lived there became outcasts in their own homes. They had now been cast out once more, blown away for good. A trace of the folly that built the place surely survived to demolish it. The blowdown made perfect sense only in a perfectly senseless world.

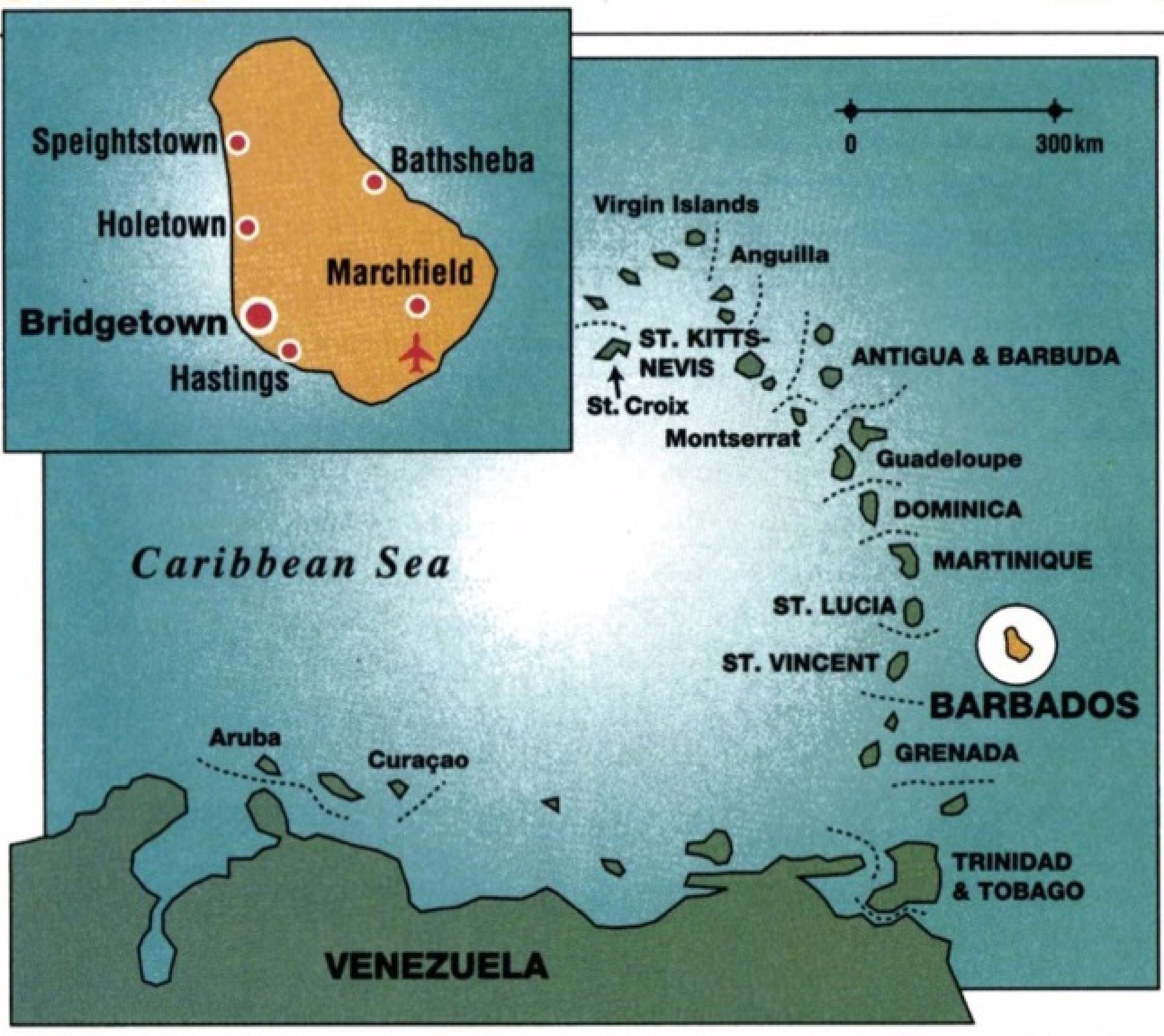
As Rowan Court tumbled and the onlookers cheered it seemed to me that a terrible, unspoken revenge was being visited on the people of the mountain ash, the children I had encountered that night 20 years earlier, whose histories had been displaced by a vacant space.

Standing beside me, an old woman wept.

Ashes to ashes. ■

Country profile

Barbados



IN the Barbadian capital, Bridgetown, a statue of Lord Horatio Nelson stands in Trafalgar Square, looking sternly towards the war memorial which honours those who died fighting for England. Nearby, the stained-glass windows of the House of Assembly feature a line of British monarchs from James I to Victoria. Beyond the capital Barbados looks to some like a tropical Dorset, full of rolling countryside and pretty parish churches. Coastal resorts have names like Hastings and Worthing; inland villages called Highgate and Clapham are redolent of London suburbia.

Nicknamed either affectionately or disparagingly 'Little England', this is the most British of the Commonwealth Caribbean islands. The tourism industry has taken up the theme with enthusiasm, promoting Barbados as a familiar haven of cricket and Yorkshire pudding.

The island's Englishness is partly the result of almost 350 years of unbroken colonial rule. Alone of all the Caribbean islands, Barbados never changed hands in the inter-European rivalry of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Thanks to its profitable sugar industry and strategic position, the British kept a tight grip on Barbados and have left their mark.

For most of the three decades after independence in 1966 Barbados has been something of a regional success story. A stable multi-party democracy, it developed a healthy economy, moving out of dependency on sugar and into tourism and manufacturing. Steady growth saw the island outstrip its neighbours, rivalling Greece or Portugal in per-capita income. The indicators are still impressive: health provision, education and housing are among the best in the Americas.

But recent developments have dented what many see as Barbadian complacency. The recession of the early 1990s battered the island's tourism industry, revealing over-reliance on fickle European and North American markets. The derelict hotels and apartment blocks which line the south coast road are a grim reminder of tourism's vagaries. Then the remnants of the sugar industry went into crisis, with low yields and under-investment blamed on droughts and poor management. The British multinational, Booker Tate, was brought in to revive the industry, but the results so far are uninspiring.

Now tourism has recovered somewhat, and the Government is keen to diversify further. Barbados has entered the offshore finance and services market, offering cheap data-processing and discreet bank accounts for tax-evaders. Manufacturing is growing, too, centred on garments and electronic parts for the US.

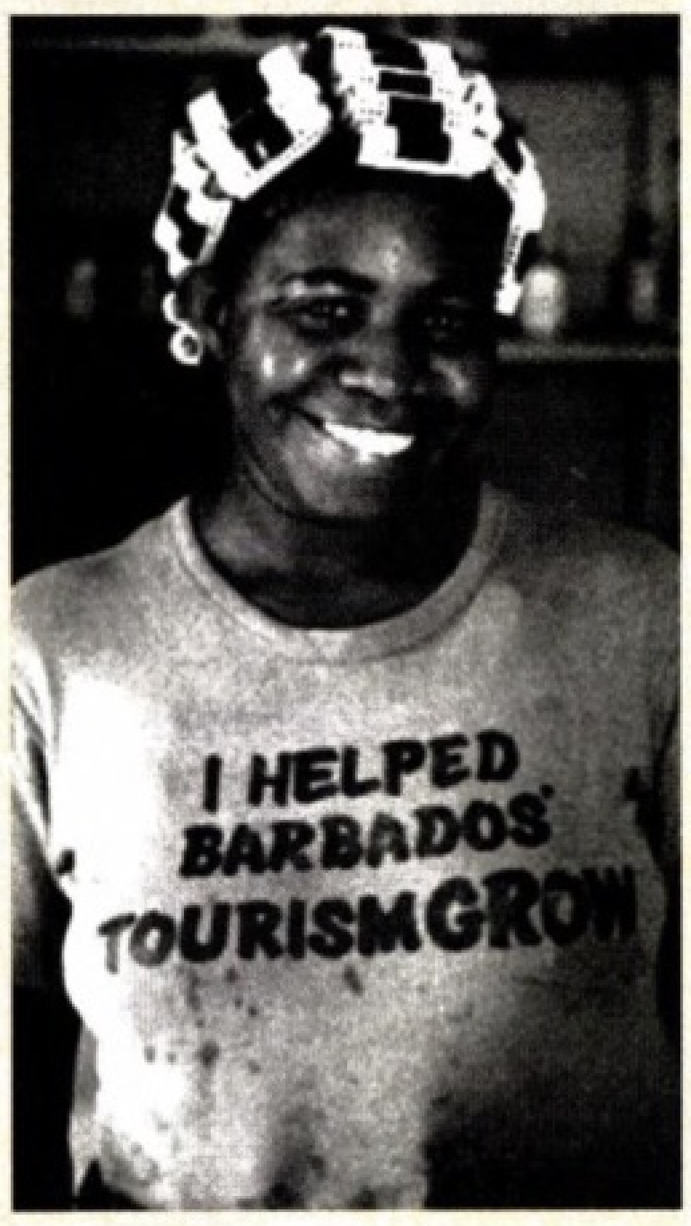
But renewed economic growth has not entirely dispelled the unease of the early 1990s. Critics of the conservative Barbados Labour Party claim that it tolerates a small white élite, descended from the colonial planters, which wields disproportionate economic power.

There is also concern that a structural-adjustment programme, introduced at the behest of the IMF in 1992, is targeting public-sector workers and jeopardizing services.

Even the cosy image of 'Little England' has come under fire in recent years, as activists have stressed the African heritage of most Barbadians and the legacy of slavery. And as young people look more towards the US for cultural models, the old imperial link seems increasingly tenuous. In 1995 it was even suggested that Nelson, a well-known supporter of slavery, should be removed from his plinth and replaced by a real national hero: cricketer Gary Sobers. ■

James Ferguson

AT A GLANCE


I HELPED BARBADOS TOURISM GROW

PHILIP WOLMUTH

Leader Prime Minister Owen Arthur
Economy GNP per capita $6,230 (UK $18,060)
Monetary unit: Barbados dollar (B$1=US$0.50)
Main exports: electronic parts, garments, financial services, sugar
Main imports: machinery, foodstuffs, chemicals. Tourism has taken over from sugar as the main foreign-exchange earner and employs about 16 per cent of the workforce.
People 261,000
Health Infant mortality 9 per 1,000 live births (US 8 per 1,000). As this figure indicates, health standards have reached rich-world levels: government investment in health services has produced impressive results.
Culture 95 per cent of 'Bajans' are of African descent, but a small white minority remains powerful. British influence is still strong, but media and fashion are dominated by the US.
Religion: Christian – predominantly Anglican.
Language: English. There is also a Bajan dialect.

Sources *Human Development Report 1995, UNDP; The State of the World's Children 1996, UNICEF; World Development Report 1995, World Bank; Caribbean Development Bank; Caribbean Insight; Latin America Monitor; Americas Review 1996.*

Never previously profiled

NI star rating

EXCELLENT	★★★★★
GOOD	★★★★
FAIR	★★★
POOR	★★
APPALLING	★

STAR RATINGS

INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★★
Despite a substantial middle class, social inequalities and pockets of poverty persist.

LITERACY ★★★★★
98 per cent: Barbados has a good track record in education, from primary to university level.

SELF-RELIANCE ★★★
Diversification has ended dependence on 'King Sugar', but most food has to be imported.

FREEDOM ★★★★
No censorship and little state repression, but police allegedly intolerant of youth.

POSITION OF WOMEN ★★★★
Now a majority at university and prominent in government and the professions, women are still more vulnerable to unemployment and low wages.

LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★★★
76 years - the same as for the UK, the US and Germany.

POLITICS

NI ASSESSMENT ★★★
Barbados has an envied reputation for political stability and open democratic debate. The conservative Barbados Labour Party is facing rising discontent over its austerity policies and stiff opposition from the Democratic Labour Party. Some observers see little difference between the two main parties.

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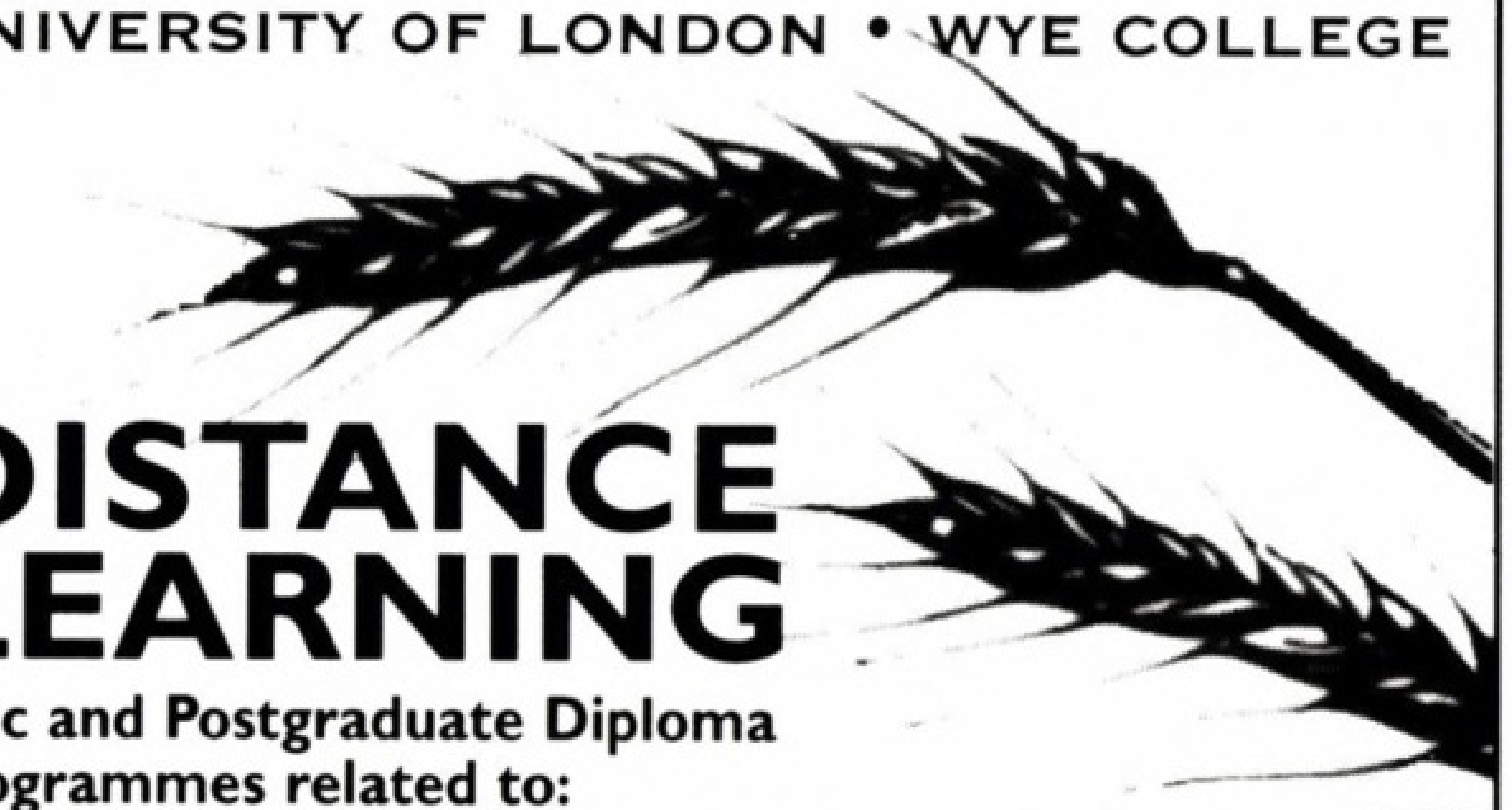

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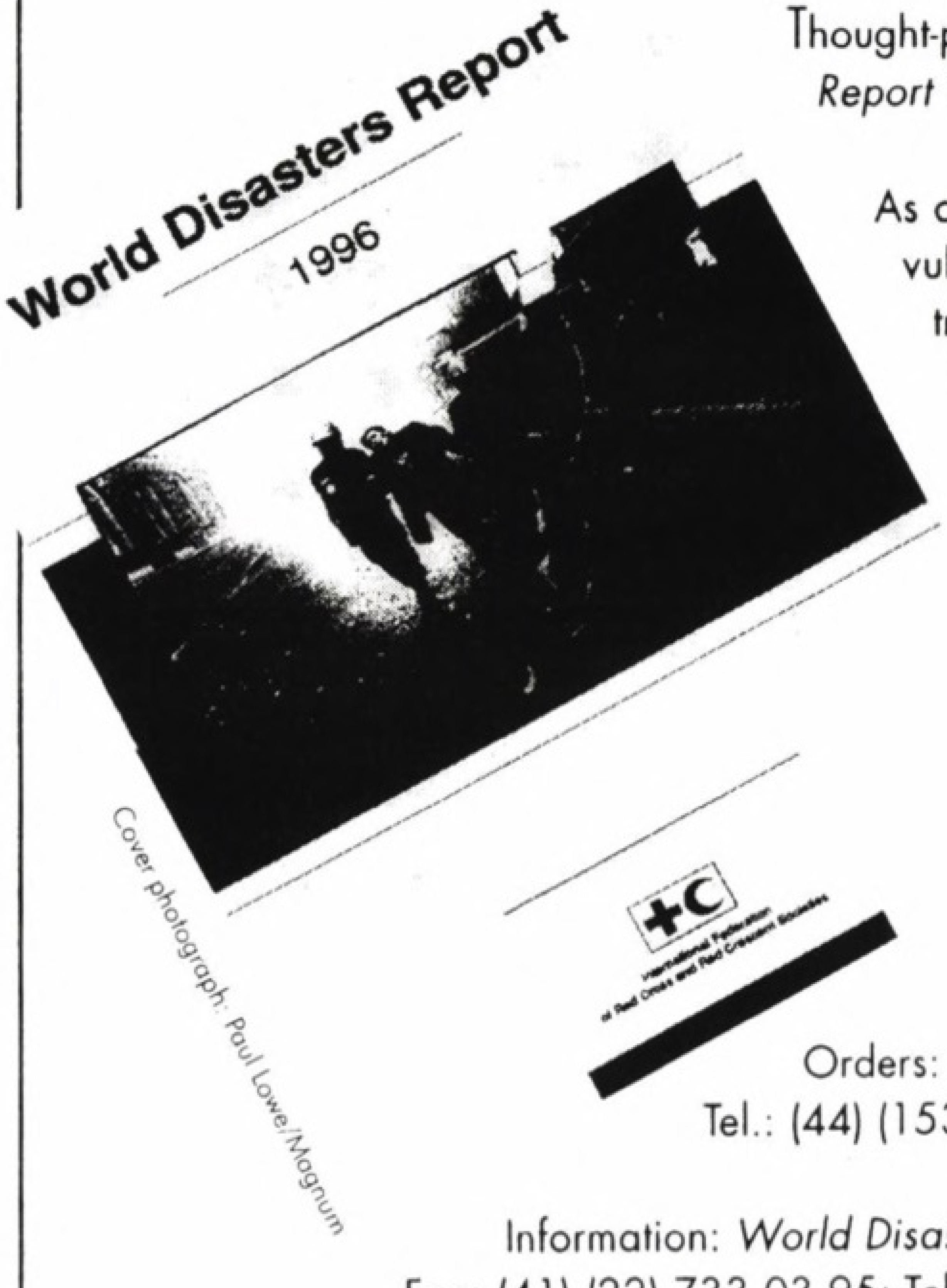

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